DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 457 373 CE 082 413

AUTHOR	Golding, Barry; Davies, Merryn; Volkoff, Veronica
TITLE	A Consolidation of ACE Research, 1990-2000. Review of Research.
INSTITUTION	National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Leabrook (Australia).
SPONS AGENCY	Australian National Training Authority, Melbourne.
ISBN	ISBN-0-87397-705-X
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	146p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 252 Kensington Road, Leabrook, South Australia 5068, Australia (cat. no. 638; $29.15 Australian). Tel: 08 8333 8400; Fax: 08 8331 9211; e-mail: vet req@ncver.edu.au; Web site: http://www.ncver.edu.au. For full text: http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr0A02.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Education; Access to Education; Adult Education; Adult Learning; *Adult Programs; Articulation (Education); *Community Education; Delivery Systems; Disadvantaged; Education Work Relationship; Educational Opportunities; Educational Quality; *Educational Research; Educational Supply; Educational Technology; *Educational Trends; Enrollment Trends; Equal Education; Experimenter Characteristics; Financial Support; Foreign Countries; Labor Force; Lifelong Learning; Literature Reviews; Longitudinal Studies; National Surveys; Outcomes of Education; Participant Characteristics; Participation; Postsecondary Education; Recognition (Achievement); Research Methodology; Research Needs; Research Projects; Researchers; State of the Art Reviews; Student Certification; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Australia; International Surveys; *TAFE (Australia)

ABSTRACT

The volume and scope of research into adult and community education (ACE) in Australia have increased significantly over the past decade. Studies designed to map, reevaluate, showcase, and promote ACE have been funded by Australia's federal and state governments and by bodies such as Adult Learning Australia. Practitioner-generated research has also proved significant. Key approaches to ACE research over the decade have ranged from broad-brush quantitative and mapping exercises and studies aiming at clarifying the extent and nature of participation and provision to projects exploring issues of practice, pedagogy, the targeting of particular client populations, and the multidimensionality of outcomes. Since the middle of the decade, ACE research has focused particularly on the underrepresentation in ACE of groups such as women, people whose native language is other than English, rural and remote populations, people with disabilities, older learners, indigenous people/communities, unemployed people, early school leavers, and small business proprietors and employees. Nonparticipation, ACE outcomes and contributions, and opportunities and challenges in ACE have been objects of research. The following areas are among those identified as meriting further research: marketing and promotion; interface with other

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

sectors; new conceptions of adult learning; learning communities; lifelong learning; and impacts of social change on ACE. (Contains 288 references.) (MN)

****
*   Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made   *
*   from the original document.   *
****

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

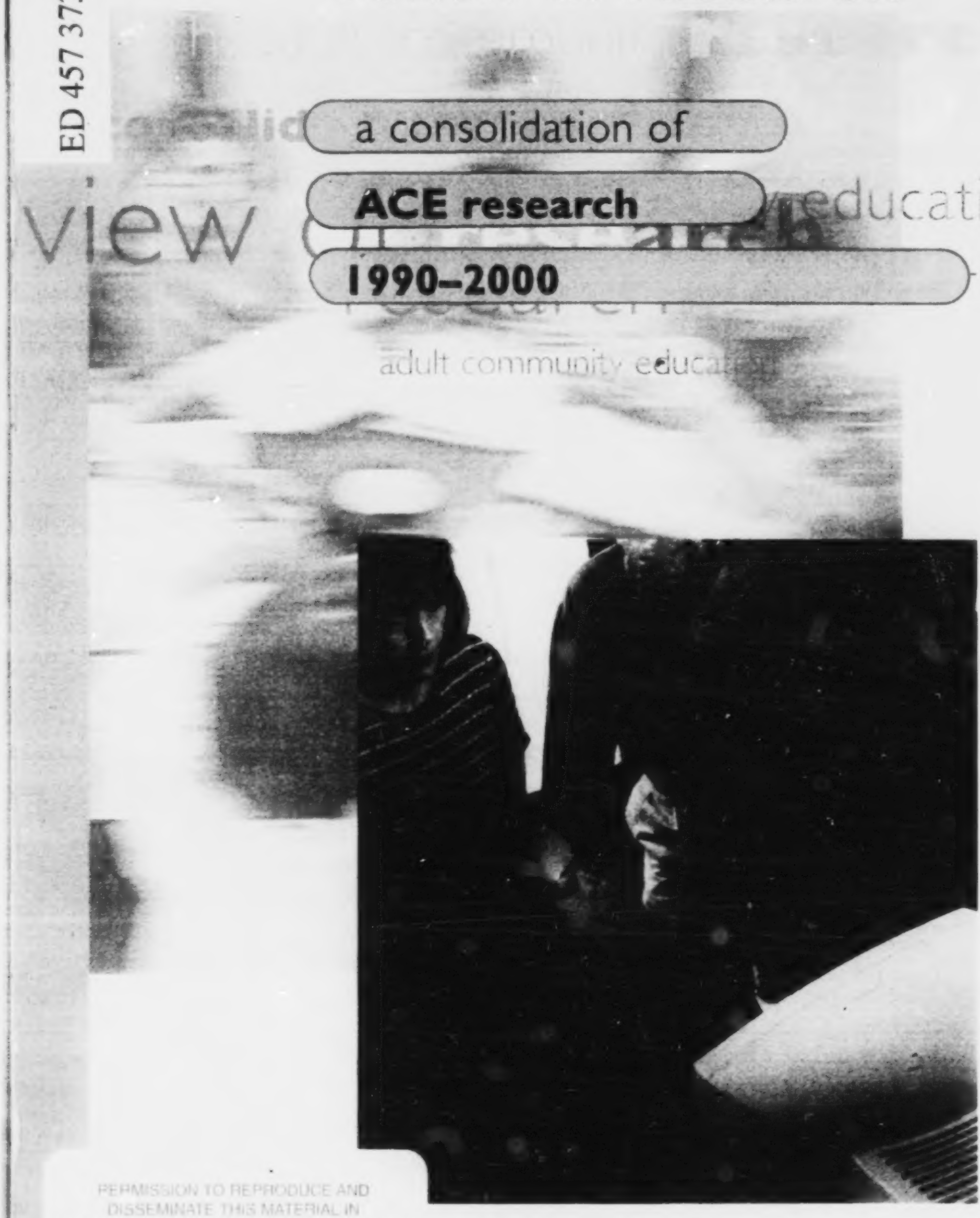
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

NCVER

ED 457 373

review of **research**

a consolidation of
ACE research
1990–2000



B Golding
M Davies
V Volkoff

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Hayman

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

review of **research**

a consolidation of ACE research

1990–2000

Barry Golding
Merryn Davies
Veronica Volkoff

NCVER

© Australian National Training Authority, 2001

This work has been produced by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) with the assistance of funding provided by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). It is published by NCVER under licence from ANTA. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this publication may be reported by any process without the written permission of NCVER Ltd. Requests should be made in writing to NCVER Ltd.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author/project team and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian National Training Authority.

ISBN 0 87397 705 X print edition
0 87397 706 8 web edition
TD/TNC 66.07

Published by NCVER Ltd
ABN 87 007 967 311

252 Kensington Road, Leabrook SA 5068
PO Box 115, Kensington Park SA 5068,
Australia

www.ncver.edu.au

contents

executive summary 5

context 15

intentions
method, assumptions and limitations

ACE research 20

who sponsors ACE research, and why?
ACE research: presuppositions and discourses
who undertakes ACE research, and why?
some ACE research approaches

the scope of ACE 39

ACE nationally
ACE by State and Territory
ACE internationally
ACE as...?
the scope of ACE in summary

who participates in ACE? 58

reasons for researching participation
national participation measures
research to widen participation
research into ACE user groups
ACE participation research by State and Territory
international research into ACE participation
research into ACE markets

ACE outcomes and contributions 95

research into ACE outcomes
research into ACE contributions
ACE quality measures
research into equity and disadvantage in ACE

opportunities and challenges in ACE 104

research about vocationalism in ACE
research into ACE interfaces
research into ACE accreditation and recognition
research into the workforce in ACE
research into new technologies in ACE
research into lifelong learning in ACE

findings and directions for further research 120

suggestions during the decade

references 126

acknowledgements 140

sources 142

executive **summary**

introduction

Adult and community education (ACE) is essentially about adult and community learning. However the ACE sector is diverse and difficult to simply demarcate from other forms of adult learning.

ACE is held together in its diversity by its commitment to, and ownership by the community, as well as by its distinctive approaches to adult learning. A defining feature of ACE provision is the central focus on the learners and their needs. ACE is less concerned than other education sectors with graded systems of formal education. Across Australia there are differences in how adult and community education is defined and delivered. But ACE is generally based around the learning needs of adults in local, neighbourhood or regional communities.

> A defining feature of ACE provision is the central focus on the learners and their needs. ACE is less concerned than other education sectors with graded systems of formal education.

The past decade has seen an increasing volume and range of research on adult and community education in Australia, sponsored by multiple sources, and targetted to multiple audiences for professional, philosophical, financial and political purposes. This report provides a consolidation of this large body of qualitative and quantitative research on the scope of ACE participation patterns, on the outcomes and contributions of ACE and on the opportunities and challenges facing ACE throughout the decade. It identifies the key strands of research effort as well as the research gaps, and suggests future research directions. The study highlights the diversity of ACE across Australia, and explores implications for its boundaries, its relationship to government and community, and its amenability to national research and policy.

background

This report was undertaken with the aim of collecting and consolidating key findings of contemporary research on adult education in Australia. In reviewing research undertaken on adult and community education in the past decade, the report provides a picture of the scope and nature of the ACE sector in Australia today while offering a detailed overview of the themes, issues, findings and discourses evident in contemporary ACE research.

This report is intended to address a broad and diverse readership—not only policy-makers in the ACE field, but the many others who participate in the ACE enterprise—paid workers, teachers, volunteers, students, and researchers. As this report makes clear, the past decade has seen a significant amount of research work undertaken in ACE in some States and Territories. As a consolidation, this report offers in condensed form, a picture of the nature and breadth of ACE activity in Australia over the decade as indicated by published research and data collection. It documents the range of issues under review by researchers and, where applicable, the shifts in focus or methodology over time. Lay readers and practitioners alike are afforded some insights and perspectives on some of the difficulties involved in arriving at an agreed picture of the state of ACE in Australia, together with significant developments through the 1990s.

In settling on the scope of inquiry, the researchers opted to cast their nets broadly. Consistent with prevailing views within ACE pedagogy and practice, a broad view of what constitutes research was adopted. Research in action, provider-based and descriptive research as well as conceptual and empirical research were included in the scope and analysis. This review includes the most accessible research between 1990 and 2000 at a local, regional, State, Territory and national level. It distinguishes, where appropriate, between literature that comes from, or is auspiced by governments, sectoral advocacy and ACE peak body organisations, and literature undertaken by committed ACE practitioners, providers and independent or external researchers. A discussion on the collection process and research methodology is found in the opening chapter, while a comprehensive bibliography is at the end of the consolidation.

ACE research

ACE has a long tradition in provision in Australia (particularly in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia), but a relatively short formal research tradition. Early in the last decade the *Come in Cinderella* report on ACE deplored the

8

inadequacy of research into ACE to that point, predicting that without adequate data on patterns of participation, provision and expenditures, 'the sector will be condemned to a marginalised existence and Australia will have failed to capitalise upon a potent education and training network' (Senate 1991, p.157).

Effectively, this research consolidation documents research into ACE through the 1990s, tracing the development of particular research themes and issues as researchers, policy-makers and practitioners negotiated changing environments of education and training in the context of a growing imperative for sectoral self-definition.

The past decade has seen strong growth in Commonwealth-funded and commissioned research into ACE. This research accords with the federal government's national policy on ACE (MYCEETA 1993), a policy which identified the need for 'appropriate research and evaluation to support the further development of ACE', including regular collection of appropriate quantitative and qualitative data, action/participatory research and a research clearing house. Such sponsored research sought to map, re-evaluate, showcase and promote ACE.

Large-scale work was also carried out at other levels. Legislative and funding support at the State level meant that two States in particular—Victoria and New South Wales—have been particularly well placed to undertake or commission large, formal and strategic ACE research within their own boundaries.

But research on and within ACE was not confined to that generated by the federal government or State governments. Bodies such as Adult Learning Australia (ALA) have also been instrumental both in developing research themes and in disseminating research to broader ACE communities. Of great significance, too, is the wealth of research, often practitioner-generated, dealing with ACE and its practice, processes, significance and responsiveness to changing social and economic contexts.

Key approaches in research in ACE over the decade range from broad-brush quantitative and mapping exercises and studies which aim to clarify the extent and nature of participation and provision, to projects which 'bring out the detail', exploring issues of practice, pedagogy, the targeting of particular client populations and the multidimensionality of outcomes.

A decade after *Come in Cinderella,* wide-ranging national and longitudinal research around the breadth of outcomes documented by that inquiry is only just beginning to materialise. Despite some contestation of definitions nationally, ACE research agendas and understandings are now well advanced, especially in Victoria and New South Wales. Differences aside, ACE forms an integral and important part of adult learning opportunities and outcomes in most States and Territories, and is an increasingly important site for vocational learning.

scope of ACE

The informal and non-award nature of much of ACE makes it difficult to draw firm boundaries around it—to enumerate the complete scope of its activity, its courses, providers and students. However, it is estimated that around 950 providers of ACE in Australia currently submit data on course participation and student activity to the national data collection. These include community organisations, neighbourhood houses, other local or self-help bodies, learning agencies or networks, and TAFE institutes. Not all ACE providers, however, contribute to national statistical collections, and this figure understates the full extent of provision.

Mapping exercises confirm that the definition of ACE and the extent to which ACE activity is linked to the publicly funded VET system varies greatly among Australian States and Territories.

Mapping exercises confirm that the definition of ACE and the extent to which ACE activity is linked to the publicly funded VET system varies greatly among Australian States and Territories.

While accepting that no precise definition of ACE applies across all States and Territories, the national policy on ACE (MCEETYA 1997) proposed some defining features: that it is learner-centred, responsive to community needs, accessible and inclusive, diverse, varied and flexible. In some States ACE is regarded as only that education conforming to this definition and occurring in community-owned and managed providers.

participation

Australians participate strongly in adult learning, from informal community learning to formal, sector-based State ACE provision. It was recently estimated that over three per cent of Australia's adult population participate in ACE (around 592 000 individuals). This estimate takes account only of activity reported in the national VET statistical collection maintained by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

Much other activity takes place but goes unreported—because some programs may not be formally recognised, or they may be located in organisations which are not recognised providers or which do not form part of a recognised network or sector. A fuller operational definition of ACE would therefore produce higher participation. For example, other surveys undertaken in some States, suggest levels of participation of between eight per cent (Victoria) and 16 per cent (New South Wales), with differences partly reflecting how widely or narrowly ACE is defined.

Research on participation has been pivotal to our understanding of ACE. It goes to the heart of questions concerning definitions—of providers, students and courses. It documents the extent of this form of education and training provision, while identifying the nature and patterns of that provision. In recording activity it also signposts where and what further services may be required as the Australian adult population experiences shifts in demographics, distribution and educational, training and social demands.

Since the middle of the decade ACE research has focussed particularly on under-representation in ACE, especially for those groups conventionally under-served by other educational sectors. Among those whose needs are regarded as especially well-served by ACE provision are women, people whose first language is other than English, rural and remote populations, people with disabilities, older learners, Indigenous people and communities, unemployed people, early school leavers and small business proprietors and employees.

Significantly, many of these groups are considered to be currently under-represented in ACE, including people with limited schooling, older-age adults, unemployed workers, and Indigenous Australians. Sole parents, people from some ethnic backgrounds, ex-offenders, the isolated and the poor would also appear to have limited involvement in ACE. In assessing what may count as under-representation, the issue is not population ratios as such (for example, there are three times as many women as men in the sector), but the economic and social needs of particular groups (on the one hand) and the potential of ACE to address these needs (on the other). Research on good practice in ACE points to the effectiveness of the sector in meeting educational and social needs of some of these groups in specific contexts.

non-participation

Barriers to participation (based on survey data) include lack of awareness of what is offered by ACE, low personal interest, perceived lack of relevance, time availability, costs, and poor information.

ACE outcomes and contributions

Outcomes of school education, higher education and institutional vocational education and training (VET) are usually measured in terms of attainment, progression, and transition. The nature of these measures reflects some key features which are generally missing from ACE or have a much more limited emphasis: graded assessment, accredited courses, vertical progression and employment based on formally defined and sometimes professionally accredited training. As the benefits of ACE are seen by adults primarily in terms of broad and longer-term improvements in employment opportunities, community participation, wellbeing and quality of life, the conventional institutional measures of attainment, progression and transition are often less relevant or not applicable.

Even in relation to the dimension of VET in ACE, the gains to adults in terms of improved job options or career promotion (or entry to small business) are hard to measure because courses are usually short, the 'value-added' effects of VET would be difficult to disentangle from other factors (motivation, depth of experience), and there are employment barriers faced by some sub-groups which involve discrimination or which are structural. On the other hand, survey evidence indicates a high level of course satisfaction on the part of adults in ACE (including in the vocational domain).

Policy-makers, researchers and ACE practitioners have sought ways to broaden definitions of ACE outcomes to more appropriately reflect the nature and extent of its contribution to individuals, the community, the economy and the nation. Research has warned against outcomes measurement which, through an overly narrow, linear or purely vocational focus fails to take into account particular contributions made by the sector. In this sense research has tended to move with policy to acknowledge different frameworks for measurement. Longer time scales, the recognition of 'pathways' within ACE and enrichment of lives of individuals, families or communities are examples here. This has allowed the identification of a wider set of important and often unexpected social, economic, community and national outcomes and contributions through ACE.

Definitions of outcomes range from course or unit completions through to the establishment of learning or employment pathways. It is documented, for example, that ACE does lead to significant recurrent involvement of adults in learning. Many undertake further courses in ACE, some enrol in TAFE and some enter university. The traffic also runs the other way. Many adults come to ACE post-TAFE or university. Research projects have traced a multiplicity of ACE-associated outcomes, including contribution to a learning culture within a community, improvements in learning skills, transformation of dispositions towards learning and community involvement, connectedness to community and improvements to social and economic well-being of families, communities and regions.

Research into outcomes has also been stimulated by governments' needs for accountability through information on results of publicly funded ACE programs. However, research is also generated by the desire of those within the sector to demonstrate the complexity and multiple facets of the ACE process, and, always, to explore ways of improving on results.

The benefits of ACE to individuals can be broad, or diffuse, and difficult to measure. Appropriate measurement is particularly important, however, given the 'lateral' rather than hierarchical nature of ACE. ACE is highly decentralised and local, and its openness or non-selectiveness enables it to be accessed by a wide range of individuals. Its cumulative or aggregate impact on communities is therefore potentially very significant, and this has been a developing research theme since the early 1990s. More and more, then, ACE has come to be seen as a vehicle for generating social capital—for creating assets in the form of more organised, better networked, better communicating individuals, with greater know-how, greater self-confidence and greater capacity and energy. The accumulation of social capital through broad participation in ACE is seen as a source of regional regeneration, neighbourhood, town or community development, working in a constructive direction against some wider economic trends which have had a negative impact on local communities.

opportunities and challenges in ACE

In the past decade national educational policies and priorities in Australia have highlighted the value of lifelong learning on a range of levels: from the individual, family and group levels to those of broader communities, regions, States and the nation. Significant bodies of research stem from the national and community interest in and commitment to lifelong learning which is a primary value in ACE.

Associated with this role in the provision of opportunities for lifelong learning are two distinct streams of provision—the offering of vocational learning, provision of which has increased in ACE over the decade, and the development of broader general education which focusses on life skills and which offers strong individual and social benefits.

The review documents research on this double focus, noting particularly, possibilities for the development of a distinctly community-based lifelong learning model. It notes also, some of the implications for ACE of this extended range of provision, including increasing recognition of the needs of its workforce, changing workplace environments, stronger and better-documented interfaces with other learning and education sectors, development of program and provider accreditation and recognition, and assimilation of new learning technologies.

The most visible area of program change has been the spread of accredited VET in ACE. While not always viewed as a welcome or sustainable emphasis, VET in ACE contexts does respond to the very frequently stated aspirations of adults. The difficulties faced by ACE providers are how to reconcile an emphasis on accredited VET with the prior (often limited) school experience of many adults, the costs of delivery (when many ACE teachers are volunteers), both of which may conflict with the more diffuse cultural or personal goals of lifelong learning and with the pedagogical values of learner-centred education.

Similar tensions are experienced over the role of ACE as a transition platform, for example, to TAFE or to university. The more transition is stressed, the more programs in ACE have to 'answer to' the institutions which set entrance requirements, including assessment, and the more the ACE classroom risks becoming selective.

The trends to more accredited VET in ACE and a possibly accentuated tertiary transition role (for example, ACE for early school leavers) have implications for the education and training of teachers in ACE, as well as for equipment and other resources.

Technological change is another challenge to the way ACE currently operates. Information and learning technologies present major opportunities for enhancement of learning and for the social and economic improvement of many of the client groups of ACE. Yet these are rich technologies, requiring extensive training and experience to utilise them effectively beyond fairly routine operations, and they also present significant cultural hurdles to disadvantaged learners. As in other adult learning sectors, the new technologies create demands on ACE staff, on prevailing pedagogical values, and on how ACE is organised as a sector.

The research identifies a range of tensions in the provision of ACE-based learning in the 1990s. In 1997 the *Beyond Cinderella* Senate inquiry suggested that 'vocational dogmatism', implemented through funding mechanisms predicated on implied vocational orientation, could lead the sector away from, rather than towards learning over a lifetime. The ACE research literature, in its totality, addresses this theme. It identifies a range of constructed divisions between ACE and other forms of education and training which could work against a recognition of the real contribution of ACE, divisions, for example, between vocational and non-vocational, private and social, market and non-market learning as well as men's and women's learning.

future directions

This research consolidation, by sifting through the most publicly available ACE research produced during the decade in Australia, was able to identify some emerging research gaps and future directions for ACE research indicated in the literature. Indeed, the idea of gaps in ACE research has been a consistent research theme in itself.

> The ACE research literature ... identifies a range of constructed divisions between ACE and other forms of education and training which could work against a recognition of the real contribution of ACE ...

It is useful to compare the state of ACE research at the start of the decade with that of the end. In the *Come in Cinderella* report in 1991, the main future research priorities were 'a coherent, comprehensive and properly funded mechanism for the collection of statistical information' (p.157) to improve information on '... patterns of participation ... who is providing what ... to what effect and at what cost' (Senate 1991, p.157). In many ways the mapping and scoping studies undertaken over the past decade have brought us much closer to a coherent picture of ACE across Australia. But they also serve to underscore its considerable diversity. While the need for such studies remains, now complemented by more systematic annual statistical collections, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners today seek to extend our understanding of ACE through work which highlights its most distinctive features.

New and emerging research perspectives are focussing on learning outcomes and contributions of ACE across the lifespan of individuals, a perspective which has the potential to transform the way vocational and other outcomes are understood. Within this context the needs of particular groups whose use of ACE is growing strongly (including young people with histories of interrupted schooling, and older people) require urgent examination. Such work would need to deal with expectations of participation, desired outcomes, appropriate teaching and learning styles and funding considerations.

There is a perception within the 'sector', however it may be defined, of a need for more strategically focussed research generally. While the past decade has seen the emergence of ground-breaking research into the nature and dimensions of ACE, together with much work on ACE as a critical part of social and community life and lifelong learning, there is a need for more research into the ACE workforce, the nature of ACE learning practice (particularly in community-embedded, learner-centred contexts), and the contribution of ACE to equity as well as to community well-being. Increasingly, researchers are highlighting the need for longer-term projects geared to analyses of contributions and outcomes of ACE, noting the importance of well-planned, longitudinal research able to throw light on varied outcomes and social impacts for groups and individuals.

The research has highlighted the extent to which ACE, like other sectors of education and training, needs to regard itself as one element in a broad provision of services. As such, issues of identity, competition and co-operation are critical. Future research must deal with these issues, covering areas such as:

- marketing and promotion
- interface with other sectors
- new conceptions of adult learning (many ways, many sites)
- what is being learned, why, and how
- learning communities, lifelong learning and learning cities
- impacts of social change (for example, unemployment, ageing issues)

A number of other, future research issues surfaced from dialogue between authors and the reviewers of this report. They included more research into:

- workers, volunteers and non-course learning
- more participation studies that blend the qualitative community analysis and the mapping of participation in communities
- ACE in community contexts
- the interface between ACE and other sectors
- the economics of ACE, including user-pays arrangements
- the potential of information technology for more effective, more widely accessible and higher levels of learning

In developing a research agenda for the future, these issues are likely to loom large. The key issues, however, will be how to sustain and nourish ACE as an open and community-based sector—with the social inclusiveness, flexibility and responsiveness that this implies—while exploiting the potential of accredited learning for employment or education and training transition.

context

This is a comprehensive review of contemporary (post-1990) Australian adult and community education (ACE) research. It cites research that identifies the nature and scope of Australian ACE during the decade to 2000. In particular, the review includes research literature related to:

- the scope of adult and community education, and the nature of the ACE sector
- the characteristics of ACE participation and provision
- the factors affecting ACE, including opportunities and challenges
- the role of ACE in lifelong learning

The review is timely in the context of wide community and government acceptance in 2000 of the importance of adult, community and lifelong learning.

The review is timely in the context of wide community and government acceptance in 2000 of the importance of adult, community and lifelong learning. ACE's self-defining characteristics have traditionally been drawn from community and adult education discourses. These characteristics have included its flexibility, ease of access, openness and responsiveness to individuals and groups as well as to communities.

However the 'sector' (in its diverse, community-embedded forms) has recently been subject to opportunities and pressures that have their origins in market, managerial and professional discourses. It is timely to examine what research says about ACE in Australia at the end of a decade of considerable change to all forms of education and training. ACE has been the only sector which has consistently embraced an educational philosophy focussed on the longer-term needs and interests of the individual (Watson 1999, p.14), promoting self-directed and self-managing learning in primarily community-owned contexts.

This review comprehensively charts, consolidates and reviews ACE diversity, characteristics, changes, opportunities, pressures, interfaces, contributions and discourses in the decade to 2000, coinciding with a review by the Ministerial

Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) ACE Task Force of its national ACE policy.

intentions

One over-arching imperative characterised Australian ACE research during the 1990s.

That was the desire by ACE and its diverse stakeholders to identify, distinguish, demarcate, promote and celebrate what it is about ACE and its learning which is distinct, valuable and different from other forms of education and vocational learning.

This research consolidation is arranged around the discussion of six research questions. Each of these six questions is explored in subsequent chapters of this study.

- *ACE research:* Does ACE have distinctive presuppositions and discourses, and how might they be identifiable through research at the level of experience and practice?
- *Scope of ACE:* How, and to what extent might or should ACE be regarded and measured as a separate form of educational provision nationally or in particular States or Territories? Are there distinctive attributes associated with ACE that lend themselves to particular research methodologies, discourses and research themes, and which demarcate ACE as a 'sector' from other forms of education and training?

  An outline of this diversity in ACE is important early in the consolidation, since it is one of several factors which makes the required conceptual leap to meaningful 'national' ACE research in Australia so challenging.
- *ACE participation:* How is participation in ACE defined in research? What does research say about who participates in ACE, why they participate, how participation varies and what attributes affect that participation?

  This question of who is (and is not) participating in ACE has been central to defining ACE externally. The question has also been part of ACE's internal research agenda (Senate 1997, p.65).
- *ACE outcomes and contributions:* What does research measure and show about outcomes and contributions of ACE?

  Outcomes research in other education and training sectors focusses heavily on course completion, attained grades and subsequent vocational success. While these outcomes can also be important as a consequence of participation, ACE research, both in Australia and overseas, has explored other, more social and community-oriented participation and outcome measures. This body of research forms a part of ongoing attempts to position and value the sector separately from VET and from other forms of post-compulsory education.

One over-arching imperative characterised Australian ACE research during the 1990s. That was the desire by ACE and its diverse stakeholders to identify, distinguish, demarcate, promote and celebrate what it is about ACE and its learning which is distinct, valuable and different from other forms of education and vocational learning.

- *Opportunities and challenges for ACE:* What does research show about the effects of, and ACE's response to, opportunities and challenges in the changing education and training environment in Australia in the 1990s?

  As with all other forms of education, ACE has used research to chart its way through a rapidly changing environment in the 1990s. The opportunities and challenges to change in the available ACE research are consolidated under six thematic headings: vocationalism in ACE, ACE interfaces, accreditation and recognition in ACE, the ACE workforce, new technologies in ACE and lifelong learning.

- *Future ACE research:* What have been the emerging priorities for future research?

  The final chapter reflects on evidence in the research during the decade suggesting possible gaps in current ACE research and emerging, future research directions.

method, assumptions and limitations

We started with the assumption that an ACE research consolidation should include factors and perspectives of interest to adult and community education stakeholders and policy-makers, but also be accessible and useful to them. Research in ACE, like this review, attempts to strike a balance between two poles. At one pole, research is required to provide the necessary richness at the level of critical analysis required for accountability by States and Territories as well as by ACE providers and national policy-makers (see Senate 1991, p.66). At the other pole, research must provide a reflection and portrayal of the diversity within the ACE in a manner that will be accessible to ACE practitioners.

Where necessary, we include background information on national policy settings that influenced the commissioning of research and its interpretation. All chapters include particular consideration of factors identified by the *Come in Cinderella* and *Beyond Cinderella* Senate reports in 1991 and 1997 respectively. Both reports, and particularly the submissions that informed them, were important and effective research consolidation exercises.

Consistent with prevailing views within ACE pedagogy and practice, we have adopted a broad view of what constitutes research. Research in action, provider-based and descriptive research as well as conceptual and empirical research were included in our scope and analysis. Our review includes the most accessible research generated and in progress at a local, regional, State, Territory and national level. It distinguishes, where appropriate, between literature that comes from or is auspiced by governments, sectoral advocacy and ACE peak body organisations and literature undertaken by committed ACE practitioners, providers and independent or external researchers.

We hold that what complicates ACE research and interpretation in particular, is that as long as there is contestation as to what ACE is and how it might be defined, there will always be contestation about what is useful ACE research and what the most appropriate research questions might be.

This research consolidation cannot claim to be definitive about what ACE is or does. As in all other fields of inquiry, the truth lies not in the research itself, but in the diverse interpretations of that research and a match (or otherwise) between the types or focus of research and discourses used. Inevitably, the truth of research lies in its match with the experienced 'reality' in practice.

We have endeavoured from the outset to explore the relationship between ACE research and the scope of ACE. We hold that what complicates ACE research and interpretation in particular, is that as long as there is contestation as to what ACE is and how it might be defined, there will always be contestation about what is useful ACE research and what the most appropriate research questions might be. Definitive 'right' answers to the six sets of research questions will not be found in particular research documents. Rather, they will be found in the meanings, importance and legitimacy that may or may not be attached to the research we cite by various ACE stakeholders in quite diverse Australian adult and community learning contexts.

This is not the only review or consolidation of ACE research in the decade to 2000. In 1992 the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (AAACE) comprehensively reviewed research into adult and community education in Australia (Harris & Willis 1992, pp.160–70). Foreman (1995) also undertook a review of research and development in ACE for AAACE. At that time Foreman's review revealed a bias in ACE research towards participation and outcomes. These issues are covered prominently in the current consolidation because of their continuing importance during the decade. The dominance of research focussed on national, NSW or Victorian ACE issues, identified by Foreman (1995), continued into the latter part of the decade. Research about challenges and opportunities in ACE, already apparent in Foreman's (1995) review became progressively more prominent during the decade. These issues are considered in the second to last chapter of this study.

We recognise that an inevitable bias towards dissemination of formal, commissioned, published, 'academic' research, is more likely to be available, as for this consolidation, in published or web format via libraries, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research Clearing Houses and its VOCED database (NCVER 2000a). Our review, in its brevity, cannot do justice to the large body of practitioner-based ACE research, including action research. Nor can it properly summarise research disseminated through State and Territory ACE network journals and newsletters. Finally, there is a large amount of unpublished local research, university theses and conference research papers which are often not readily available. Some 'low-key' research, though less accessible, might actually be more 'ground-breaking' than commissioned research since it often more open-ended and exploratory.

Our consolidation does not attempt to delve into the extensive curriculum and field of studies literature related to ACE, such as into adult literacy and language research. Because of its brevity, it only briefly reviews the extensive research literature focussing on groups in ACE and the extensive informal and non-formal adult and community learning beyond ACE.

In accord with our emphasis on inclusiveness, accountability and consultation, respected and independent ACE researchers in each State and Territory as well as a project steering committee provided feedback on both the method and preliminary drafts. Acknowledgement of this important and valued assistance as well as sources of data are found on pages 140–141, and 142 respectively of this report.

ACE research

who sponsors ACE research, and why?

Since the creation of ANTA in 1994 there has been an increase in Commonwealth government (particularly the Ministerial Committee on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] co-ordinated and Australian National Training Authority [ANTA] funded) commissioned research into ACE. This national research has evaluated, showcased and extended the particular utility of the sectoral, State-supported forms of ACE and made explicit connections to the national vocational training reform agenda. An analysis to 1996 of the role of ACE in the implementation of a national system for vocational education (VET) is found in Schofield and Dryen (1996).

As the ANTA CEO (Terry Moran) pointed out in the foreword of Schofield and Dryen's paper, while ACE had not been formally part of the ANTA agreement, ACE providers, through the growth in the training market, were seen as a growing and important source of recognised VET in Australia. Schofield and Dryen (1996, p.1) anticipated that because of a 'mutual intent to deliver vocational education and training outcomes within the national VET framework', the ACE–VET interface 'needs to be seen as fluid and constantly evolving as the ACE and VET relationship grows and matures'. The development of VET-oriented ACE research in the decade followed identification of ANTA responsibility for VET in ACE in MCEETYA's (1993, p.7) national ACE policy.

> ACE providers, through the growth in the training market, were seen as a growing and important source of recognised VET in Australia.

There has been a particular emphasis since 1990 on visible and widely disseminated research commissioned by and within the two Australian States with well-defined ACE sectors (Victoria and New South Wales). The relative development and strength of ACE as independent sectors in both States has made this an obvious outcome. This State-based research has been deliberately (and very effectively) targetted at strengthening the identity and knowledge of already coherent, government-supported ACE sectors and providers in Victoria and New South Wales. The ACE research advances in these States have been important and significant. As the attached bibliography shows, adult and community education research outside these ACE 'sectors' and particularly beyond the two large ACE-sector States has also been significant in contributing to our overall understandings of ACE in national terms.

For a range of reasons, Victoria and New South Wales have been better placed to undertake and commission large, formal and strategic ACE research. They have also been more able, via research to quickly and strategically respond to emerging national policy imperatives. Legislative support for ACE in both States has generated a significant capacity for ACE provision. It has also tended to support strong community networks, including research networks, in both States.

Given the diversity of ACE across States and Territories, it is unwise to extrapolate too broadly from findings of individual pieces of State-based research. Although much ACE research is undertaken in New South Wales and Victoria, the findings and research methods used may not be necessarily relevant to, able to be duplicated in, or directly adapted to other States or Territories. Any research consolidation based on the most accessible and most widely disseminated research unwittingly perpetuates an 'eastern seaboard' bias.

Turning to peak bodies in adult and community education itself, there has been a dominance of widely disseminated research by Adult Learning Australia (Australian Association of Adult and Community Education [AAACE] before November 1998), in contrast to research by other national representative and peak bodies during the decade. These other national adult or community education bodies (AAACE 1996) include the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, Language Australia, the Federation of Ethnic Community Councils, the Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers and the Network of Women in Further Education.

At another level, much less obvious and often less formal research is conducted by vibrant adult learning networks which lie outside the dominant, State-supported sectors that exist in some form in most States and the ACT. ACE research is also conducted by the Council of Adult Education (in Victoria), workers' educational associations (in South Australia and New South Wales), as well as in a wide range of community education organisations in all other States and Territories. This 'other' research attracts less funding but often offers much in the way of puzzlement, critique, reflexivity and advocacy, all of which have strong traditions in ACE.

It may be that ACE research has, counter to other ACE philosophies, tended to concentrate on discourses, themes and methodologies determined by external imperatives and outside stakeholders rather than being generated from within. Some research may be driven by external policy imperatives, particularly related to defining and extending ACE's vocational outcomes, contributions and boundaries. A question worth asking may be: to what extent has ACE been able to use research to support and validate practitioners who continue to grapple with the rapidly changing nature of community need and of ACE practice? In what ways can research address inequities in funding of ACE, so that adult learning is available to individuals in community contexts across State and Territory borders?

Information relating to who sponsors ACE research, and why, is relevant to explaining tensions in directions of research on ACE nationally.

Information relating to who sponsors ACE research, and why, is relevant to explaining tensions in directions of research on ACE nationally.

Some national, State and Territory research into ACE, including the measurement and mapping of ACE, has been co-ordinated through the MCEETYA ACE Task Force. In many senses, measuring and mapping ACE as a homogeneous sector on the basis of a small number of policy-oriented outcome dimensions, is in conflict with, and counter-intuitive to, many of ACE's assumptions about situated, holistic learning in community settings. Unlike school and university sectors, ACE sector learning, content, contexts and outcomes remain relatively poorly researched and difficult to simply encapsulate. ACE research, inclusive of non-vocational and transformational outcomes, suggests that such outcomes are particularly highly valued by ACE participants and practitioners as well as by communities.

While any national research that assumes ACE homogeneity within all States and Territories is bound to be problematic, some research has found ways around the problems. McIntyre and Kimberley (1998), in their multi-state research on pathways for women from ACE to VET, for example, proceeded by making the problems and their assumptions clear (pp.2–3) as well as by accommodating the variety of institutional arrangements amongst the States. Volkoff, Golding and Jenkin (1999), in their three-State, comparative study of VET in ACE, included State ACE and 'TAFE ACE' in their sample, with a TAFE sample as a form of experimental control.

In some ways, State sector-based and national ACE research may have reached their natural limits in terms of national policy application. The most recent illustration of such constraints is the exploration of the application of VET policy frameworks (such as national key performance indicators) to learning 'in the community'. Dryen and Schofield question whether this can occur without distorting the scope and value of lifelong learning (Dryen & Schofield 1999, pp.18, 43–5). There are also signs that official reporting requirements on the sector, such as that co-ordinated through the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, may not be supported in all cases by data collection at the provider level.

ACE research: **presuppositions** and **discourses**

There are choices between a number of different ways of thinking and writing about ACE (discourses). Choices about discourses underpin all ACE research and its interpretation. Which choices are made and the methods chosen to research ACE depend on the purposes of research as well as presuppositions about what ACE is. This section focusses on presuppositions about ACE which influence particular discourses. Later sections tease out some of the inter-relationships between researchers and their chosen research methods in ACE.

While ACE research purposes vary, education and training research generally, as Funnell (1996, p.33) suggested, '... is most often done to settle an argument, to work through an issue, to find out whether something is as it seems'. Research also has the purpose and capacity to inform (and change) currently held theories as well as existing practice.

presuppositions about the value of ACE research

Presuppositions about ACE and its purposes certainly influence research and vice versa. These presuppositions vary across Australia. ACE has a long tradition in practice in Australia (particularly in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia) but a relatively short formal research tradition. Research into ACE has added an important dimension to, and healthy critique of ACE in the 1990s, in those four States in particular. ACE practitioners have been motivated by challenges and opportunities to question and grapple with workplace reform, economic restructuring and implementation of the national training agenda, and question which parts of the past still hold true, and which other parts must be left behind. As Funnell (1996, p.38) suggested in relation to VET research, a number of radical, external and intersecting pressures on ACE in the 1990s '... have run across the grain' of previous knowledge of ACE based primarily on experience and tradition.

A large number of practitioners and participants have personal experience of ACE. Despite (and perhaps because of) a growing body of ACE research conducted largely by researchers located outside the ACE sector, there remains a widespread (and perhaps healthy) scepticism within ACE about the utility of research (ACFEB 1997b). On one hand there is an understandable perception at the level of practice that people who have experienced and know ACE at that level are better placed to know and understand it than outside researchers. As Funnell (1996, p.35) pointed out in a discussion of ways of knowing in research, 'personal experience is a powerful knowledge source. Our personal experience sometimes allows us to see a situation better than a naive outsider would'. On the other hand, there is also a widely held perception about the value of the independence of research, and a necessary 'distance' between the research to ensure credibility and authority of findings.

Research into ACE is strongest in Australia where ACE has the highest community profile and the strongest government recognition and support.

There is no doubt that the most visible and widely disseminated research into ACE in the 1990s has been commissioned from positions of academic and government authority associated with State and national policy imperatives. The bulk of that research has indeed been undertaken by a small number of expert, university-based, 'outside' researchers, almost entirely in New South Wales and Victoria. Robinson and Davis (1997, p.7) ascribed this bias to a 'relatively high level of activity and supporting infra-structure [which] ensures a viable field of inquiry'. As early as 1993, AAACE was concerned about 'the myth of educational research as a high powered activity, which can only be undertaken competently by high priests (academics) who have been properly initiated into its mysteries' (AAACE 1993, p.21).

Research into ACE is strongest in Australia where ACE has the highest community profile and the strongest government recognition and support. However it would be simplistic to ascribe the almost complete lack of rigorous ACE research outside Victoria and New South Wales only to a lack of funding. There is understandable concern about the research bias from ACE providers in some other States and Territories, particularly where traditions, experiences and common sense knowledge, perspectives and presuppositions about ACE may be in direct opposition to, or systematically excluded, from those attributes underpinning 'outside' research. For example, most national research and data which focusses on the ACE–VET interface (Robinson & Davis 1997, p.7) and which assumes that ACE is only 'community owned and managed', does little to inform the experience of many (but not all) ACE providers or practitioners operating from TAFE in Queensland, Tasmania or Western Australia. Conversely, national research and data relying on program-based ACE definitions might not be understood by most Victorian and New South Wales ACE sector-based practitioners.

This is not to say that formal ACE research is not valued or respected. However there is an ethos in ACE that attempts to ground research in practice. Macrae and Hazel (1998), for example, edited a summary of researcher perspectives on Victorian ACE research and showed how research might be 'woven into the fabric of everyday adult education, integrated with practice, and related to real questions and the experiences of learners and practitioners' (p.5).

McIntyre (2000, p.105), based in NSW, identified other forms of tension in ACE 'between an institutional perspective and a learning perspective'. McIntyre also identified '... deep ideological differences about adult education and training that affect what is seen as the meaning and purpose of research' (McIntyre 2000, p.105; also see McIntyre 1993). Foley (2000, p.21), also writing from a NSW perspective, concluded that frameworks for understanding adult education need to be holistic (comprehensively accounting for contextual and ethical factors), coherent (giving a clear account of the ways in which different factors interact in particular situations) and strategic (allowing for action at a micro and macro level).

AAACE throughout the decade, consistent with national ACE policy (MCEETYA 1993, Outcome 5.4), tended to encourage research supportive of the further development of ACE (Foreman 1995). AAACE acknowledged the benefits of linking national ACE research imperatives to ANTA's projected outcomes in the ANTA national strategy 1994. ANTA, like ACE, sought to create greater responsiveness in VET through enhanced quality, improved accessibility and increased efficiency (Foreman 1995, p.1).

By 2000, Adult Learning Australia (ALA) recognised that while some of the debates had changed, some of the older research questions had moved into sharper focus. Indeed, McIntyre (1999) argued that 'ACE policy has adopted and made its own the discourse of *lifelong learning* and adult participation ...'. Field (2000, p.10) argued that as lifelong learning moves up the policy agenda, 'the questions of who participates and who does not (and why) are posed ever more sharply'. Field was concerned that ACE researchers were 'still trapped in a model of learning as the accumulation of individual human capital' (p.12). Further, he observed that 'Social capital—the collective resources and benefits accumulated through networks, shared values and trust—is largely neglected'. ANTA also recognised that the focus had changed, and in 2000 espoused the need to focus on 'community' or 'community of interest' through the ACE National Program conducted through NCVER (*Adult Learning Australia,* Autumn 2000, p.14). In effect, recent ACE research has confirmed what participants have experienced long before social capital theory: that ACE builds communities as well as individuals.

... recent ACE research has confirmed what participants have experienced long before social capital theory: that ACE builds communities as well as individuals.

ACE discourses

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, discourses are essentially ways of thinking and writing. All ACE research forms part of a wider set of discourses. A paper by McIntyre (1999) titled 'The discursive construction of ACE in national policy' pointed out that '... the term ACE has been skilfully used to name, mobilise, organise, defend, legitimate and control a range of activity in the different states' (p.1). McIntyre also suggested that:

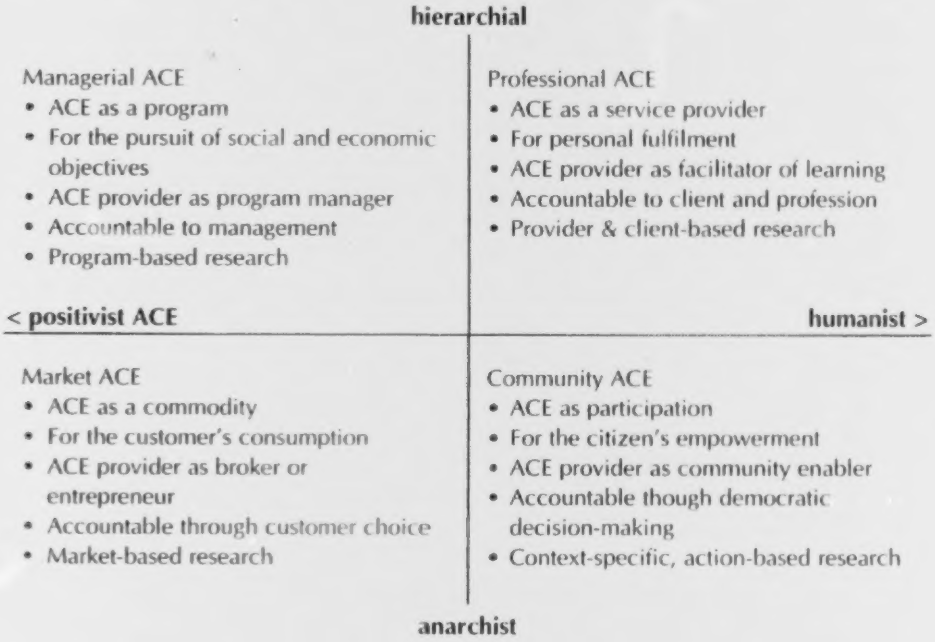
> *In the story of ACE's inclusion in ANTA, the policy discourse shifts from one in terms of sectoral recognition, a language of 'claims' and achievements, to a language of worth and validity, as the state debates on what terms if at all community adult education should count as part of the greater vocational education and training system.* (McIntyre 1999, p.4)

Australia was not alone in debating such issues in adult education. Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997), for example, argued from a United Kingdom perspective that there had been a '... dominance of discourses such as the New Right and vocationalism' which had led to 'an emphasis on adult education as a consumable good—affecting social practice and offering postmodern ways of thinking about the self and the role of experience' (reviewed in ARIS 1999, p.12).

Figure 1 outlines some alternative, competing discourses for thinking about what ACE is, and for categorising types of research consistent with those discourses. Our figure has been adapted from Ife (1997) and Watson (1999). While it tends to artificially divide ACE into four mutually exclusive categories, ACE and ACE research perspectives are clearly not as simple as that.

Despite its limitations, figure 1 is useful in beginning to explain why different researchers come up with different answers as to what ACE is and does, measurement issues aside. It depends on researcher values, research *and* participant assumptions and presuppositions about what ACE is, what it is for, what it provides and to whom it is accountable. The figure helps to explain how different researchers can look at ACE practice in the same ACE provider and report different things. The figure is also useful in teasing out why ACE stakeholders (providers, participants) see themselves and the research on their 'sector' from several different, often competing discourses.

figure 1: some competing ACE discourses (after Ife 1997 and Watson 1999)



hierarchial

Managerial ACE
- ACE as a program
- For the pursuit of social and economic objectives
- ACE provider as program manager
- Accountable to management
- Program-based research

Professional ACE
- ACE as a service provider
- For personal fulfilment
- ACE provider as facilitator of learning
- Accountable to client and profession
- Provider & client-based research

< positivist ACE **humanist >**

Market ACE
- ACE as a commodity
- For the customer's consumption
- ACE provider as broker or entrepreneur
- Accountable through customer choice
- Market-based research

Community ACE
- ACE as participation
- For the citizen's empowerment
- ACE provider as community enabler
- Accountable though democratic decision-making
- Context-specific, action-based research

anarchist

Figure 1 also helps to explain why top-down, sector-oriented ACE research, commonly commissioned by stakeholders on the positivist (managerial and market) side of the continuum, differs from humanist research which focusses on ACE service and participation. Finally, the figure is useful in identifying commonalities as well as differences between ways of thinking about, or 'discourses' of ACE and ACE research. It helps to explain why there will always be a range of possible discourses about ACE, and why there a tendency for discourses from other areas of education and training to subvert or colonise ACE's own discourses. What differs between research discourses in ACE is not their internal truth or validity, but what they value and therefore highlight.

There are other ways of analysing and separating competing discourses. One way is particularly useful when considering ACE–VET interfaces. It involves looking at the 'two basic orientations towards education and training' identified in *Beyond*

Cinderella (Senate 1997). One orientation, derived primarily from VET, values, and is therefore based on, the need for people to develop and maintain technical and professional skills to ensure an internationally competitive workforce. The other orientation, derived primarily from ACE, values and is based on the broader social, cultural and personal values concerned with the enrichment of communities and the fulfillment of human lives.

What differs between research discourses in ACE is not their internal truth or validity, but what they value and therefore highlight.

A number of discourses dominated ACE towards the end of the decade. McIntyre (1998, p.170) identified at least three: the ubiquitous discourse of lifelong learning, the discourse of the economic necessity of education and training markets associated with economic rationalism, and the discourse of equity as a second chance for disadvantaged groups.

Other discourses operate in ACE. For example, Hobson and Welbourne (1998) analysed several international intellectual discourses of adult development and adult learning. They concluded that adult learning, far from being simply about mastery of skills and content, is fundamentally about empowering and transforming learners:

> *... to stand within and beyond society by imagining other ways of thinking and feeling and other sets of values and social relationships. It is these human and social sources of change that give direction to adult education.*
>
> (Hobson & Welbourne 1998, p.83)

Discourses also drive ACE taxonomies. While Bagnall (1994) proposed that ACE is fundamentally and appropriately non-formal, he suggested that the veracity of any ACE taxonomy will depend on the extent to which it captures those normative beliefs (that is, beliefs which say what *should* happen) with respect to ACE. An examination of some overlapping and competing ACE taxonomies used in existing ACE research is contained in the following chapter.

Whatever discourse is used, any decision to use a particular classification system to divide ACE learning from other forms of learning will always be normative, since it presupposes what is important and what *should* happen in ACE. While it is also common to define and categorise classes and conventional boundaries *within* ACE (such as between different programs, fields of study, types of provision or providers), there are few natural or discontinuous boundaries. Decisions are deliberate about what categories, classes and boundaries are (and are not) recognised and about what is worth measuring within the diversity of ACE practice.

The decisions are not necessarily based on logic, but on choices between values, history, tradition, conventional wisdom, and pragmatic opportunity.

It is important neither to disregard nor overplay the importance of this history and tradition in ACE discourses. Tight (1996) noted that while adult education in the United Kingdom has its own 'great tradition', traditions represent process rather than constancy, and are subject to continual re-interpretation. While Australia has somewhat different traditions of adult education from those in the UK, those traditions and attributes that define ACE vary across Australia and have changed over time. The relative importance of concepts which have come to define different types of 'ACE' in Australia have also changed over time. Indeed, several learning concepts and constructs, such as lifelong learning and ACE itself, have been recycled, re-interpreted and renamed, as recognised by Tight (1996).

The process of using research discourses to legitimate politically useful concepts is very apparent in ACE in Australia, and highly relevant to the current review. As Tight (1996, p.65) suggested, 'labelling a set of issues or ideas as a concept effectively legitimates, and to some extent demarcates, them as an area for investigation'. As suggested by a number of Australian vocational education and training researchers in Selby Smith (1999), research often follows rather than leads policy. Research discourses that validate and are consistent with government ACE policies will always be easier to justify, fund and implement in practice.

who undertakes ACE research, and why?

The question of who undertakes ACE research is rarely posed. However there is much discussion about whether ACE research meets the need of academics (who are rarely directly involved in ACE practice but who undertake most theoretical research) or ACE practitioners and educators (who do little theoretical research but are engaged in much practice). Ward (1994), in a discussion of researcher identity in adult literacy asked, somewhat rhetorically, whether '... those from the Higher Education sector are just "outsiders" playing academic games with teachers' classrooms and students' lives?' (p.4). Ward analysed the widespread and unhelpful nature of this binary opposition of 'theory *versus* practice', which apparently pits the 'ivory tower' against the 'real world'.

Ward (1994, p.6) also argued for research as a flexible and fluid process, open to negotiation and change and to subversion and as political strategy. Ward suggested that, on one hand, 'it is unreasonable to relegate *all* university staff to the dustbin of irrelevance' just because they work at a university, or on the other hand, to accord research higher status than other forms of knowledge, simply because it has been done with authority or within a university.

Social action and participative research in community settings and practitioner research which is reflective of practice is common in ACE, although not necessarily reflected in the most accessible research available nationally. ACE researchers have often attempted to fit research and practice together. The preliminary information for the AAACE Research Conference in 1994 (AAACE 1993, p.20) argued that: 'Increasingly, good educational research is seen as being grounded in actual educational practice and 'good educational practice is seen as being informed by grounded educational research'. Indeed, Seddon (1996) suggested that:

> ... *research* data *is an extended and elaborated version of experience, and* theory *comes to the aid of common sense in thinking about data.* ... good practice which is informed by research will make explicit *how and why the data was obtained, how sense was made of it and how best this can be translated into action.* (Seddon 1996, p.1 [Seddon's emphases])

... Australian ACE practitioners, policy-makers and researchers have been faced with a number of alternative strategies ... between the extremes—the obvious 'ostrich' and 'guerilla' approaches ...

The Adult, Community and Further Education Board's (ACFEB 1997b, 1999f) and the Board of Adult and Community Education's (BACE) (1996a) ongoing deliberations about developing ACE research cultures in Victoria and New South Wales respectively, provide diverse insights into why ACE does research on itself. Marie Brennan (ACFEB 1997b, p.7) in a critique of ACFEB's research strategy, argued that while ACFE had been '... marginalised but at the same time largely free from surveillance ...', it was '... now being called upon to legitimate itself through accreditation and accountability for funds'. Parts of the Victorian sector, however, were seen by Brennan to be well placed to generate counter-discourses. Brennan suggested that others perceived ACE's domination by women as a problem in a 'rapidly changing, stressed and masculinist nation state', and implied that research had the potential to promote diversity and highlight power relations by 'acknowledgement and interrogation of the contradictions and silences' (ACFEB 1997b, p.7).

Faced with extreme and rapid change and agendas at times beyond the sector's direct control, Australian ACE practitioners, policy-makers and researchers have been faced with a number of alternative strategies outlined by Barry Brennan (1997).

In between the extremes—the obvious 'ostrich' and 'guerilla' approaches—Brennan teased out features of the 'engagement' approach, acknowledging that by taking such an approach, the researcher risked being 'subtly taken over' by the commissioning authorities or becoming 'co-opted out of being effective'. This latter theme was powerfully elaborated in an equity research context by Butler and Ferrier (1999).

In a number of instances ACE researchers have used research to deconstruct prevailing policy assumptions. McIntyre (1999) for example, identified some ACE research achievements, suggesting that ACE research had very effectively '... deconstructed the absurdity of the vocational/non-vocational divide that the state had employed to define the boundaries of TAFE and adult education' (p.6), as was apparent in the discourse of course classifications and 'streams' of study. McIntyre further argued that '... the research on participation and outcomes in ACE showed the extent to which ACE was in practice a vocational provider' (McIntyre 1999, p.6). A similar theme had been opened up earlier in the decade in NSW by McIntyre, Morris and Tennant (1993) and followed up by McIntyre, Foley, Morris and Tennant (1995). The theme was recently explored again in Volkoff, Golding and Jenkin (1999).

In other cases, ACE research has had a primarily pragmatic, political function. Daly (1994, p.12), writing in *Fine Print,* analysed the *use* of research. Daly argued that the nature and function of government-funded research '... is inextricably bound up with the project of governing the population, and 'an integral and essential part of a shift from overt to covert government'. He concluded that, in effect, research was necessary since 'the population must be known in order to be governed'. McCormack (1994) echoed this theme, arguably relevant to ACE in the 1990s, when he observed that:

> *In hard times, research becomes a way governments can impose their agendas on education. Research becomes a way of shifting power, agency and initiative away from classroom teachers via academic researchers to bureaucratic system managers.* (McCormack 1994, p.21)

There is another side of research that is essentially affirming of ACE. There has been a desire in the decade by many researchers to use the Cinderella analogy to demonstrate Cinderella's 'coming out'. ACE has been seen to have come of age and value in the 1990s after a long history of marginalisation. ACE research has been used to demonstrate a sector whose practice and policy is informed by research and which is valuable enough to warrant a research focus. By the end of the decade, ACE was indeed producing research to confirm and sharpen its professionalism.

To summarise, post-modern, post-empiricist thinking, as McCormack (1994, p.22) argued, accepts that ACE researchers can't produce answers to ACE's practical questions. As Foley (1993, p.75) also argued, 'adult education research takes place in particular social contexts, and is shaped by particular interests and values. As such it is a contested practice'. It is sobering, and also potentially empowering, to realise that ACE research literature and the researchers who undertake it, are unable to independently know or control ACE; rather, research is commissioned, undertaken, disseminated, and healthily discussed and contested by researchers with biases and values in social and political contexts.

In summary, it is important to acknowledge that ACE policy development, research and evaluation is political and contextual, as well as a rational and theoretical process ...

Meanings of completed ACE research also are not fixed. As Usher (1993, p.114) noted of international adult education research, 'texts are not simply what is written on the page or what they represent outside the text'. Usher implied that research could only be understood by becoming aware of where the text 'sits' (Usher 1993, p.114). Specifically, Usher identified the critical importance in adult education of: *con-text* (the 'situated' autobiography of the researcher and the reader); *pre-text* (that which is before the text, including language, writing and rhetorical conventions and devices used by the researcher); *sub-text* (that which is beneath the text, including the power–knowledge relations located in particular research discourses and paradigms); and the *inter-text* (what other research is either used in or absent from the text).

In summary, it is important to acknowledge that ACE policy development, research and evaluation is political and contextual, as well as a rational and theoretical process, and that '... the goal of research is not necessarily to find a right answer. Rather, research is a vehicle for participating in a debate about what policy might be right' (Don Edgar cited in ACFEB 1997b, p.2).

some ACE **research approaches**

While a number of research methods have been identified as appropriate to adult education (for example, McIntyre in Harris & Willis 1992, pp.170–6; ACFEB 1996b, 1996c), these methods are also sometimes contested. Illustrations of this contestation over diverse methods can be found within ACE itself. For example, beginning in 1996, ACFEB's *Multiple Choice* magazine in Victoria regularly highlighted a number of different research methods which were seen to '... lend themselves both practically and philosophically to use in research in the sector' (ACFEB 1996b, p.8). Two examples will be used to illustrate the contestation between methods.

Sanguinetti (1994) argued for wider use of participatory action research in ACE as a means of developing a culture of professional collaboration, reflection, initiative and courage. This participatory action research method was the first one featured in the ACFEB *Multiple Choice* series (ACFEB 1996b, pp.8–10). Daly (1994, p.13), however, argued that social research cannot be carried out in the absence of power. He considered the idea that a *researcher* (with the formal authority to produce knowledge) and the *researched* can collaboratively and democratically organise research to be naive, utopian and dangerous. Other ACE researchers argued for compromise using more than one or 'multiple methods' (for example, ACFEB 1996c, pp.8–9).

McIntyre (in Harris & Willis 1992, pp. 173–5) identified five common research 'modes' in ACE: academic, policy, practitioner, participatory and activist. We make no suggestions in this research consolidation that any particular mode or approach to research is more 'correct' in ACE. However for the purposes of broadly categorising and illustrating different types of research approaches used in ACE during the decade to 2000, we have categorised them below into quantitative approaches, mapping approaches and qualitative approaches.

some quantitative approaches

Throughout the 1990s the qualities which set ACE apart from other educational sectors—its diversity, its breadth of coverage and its ability to respond to changing community needs or demands in appropriate and timely ways have been highlighted as among the sector's key strengths. The national policy on ACE (MCEETYA 1997), for example, recognised the ACE sector's diversity as a positive feature. It explicitly acknowledged, but side-stepped, the lack of precise definitions of the sector on a national basis, when it noted that: 'This policy statement is not concerned with defining the precise boundaries of ACE. This is best done in each of the States and Territories' (MCEETYA 1997).

Nevertheless, significant features of the national policy's framework were premised on assumptions of specific and accurate quantitative methodologies; for example, maintaining and enhancing support for ACE implies links between resources and quantifiable and recognised activity. Similarly, setting up quality systems in ACE entails establishment of quantifiable and measurable program delivery systems. In most cases, funding in ACE is premised on measurable delivery.

Access and participation objectives for ACE, with their focus on the need for greater participation by specific groups currently under-served by education sectors generally, also demand quantification and measurement. In these contexts, the demands on 'the sector' imply and require at least some quantitative approach to research or evaluation.

Modes of quantification affect research findings. Internationally, a favoured form of quantification of adult education activity is the population survey, which samples large numbers of households to ascertain the incidence of adult education participation. These surveys have the advantage of 'treading lightly' on the sector: they do not impact on its staff or its own data collection mechanisms. They can take a broad view of what constitutes adult education activity and lead to very different perspectives on levels of ACE participation than those determined by aggregated data from sectors and providers. When a population survey of this nature was carried out in South Australia in 1984, it was found that almost a third of the South Australian population had taken a non-formal adult education course in the previous five years (ABS 1984 cited in Kelly & Goldsworthy 1993, p.9). The pioneering ABS (1995) pathways and outcomes report on ACE was based on a three-State population survey.

It is possible (and important) to argue that ACE has more value than numbers participating or completing programs. ACE can also be counted as the informal but valuable learning associated with volunteer and participant involvement in and management of community-based organisations (Robertson & Shearwood 1996). However, there have been few attempts to quantify or count that involvement as either participation in, or outcomes from ACE.

Neither broad-based surveys of ACE participants (for example, ABS 1995) nor sector-based ACE data have met the needs of policy-makers and funding bodies seeking guidance (or legitimation) for resource allocation in ACE. The past decade has seen a number of attempts to use quantitative data to wrestle ACE into a definable and quantifiable national, 'sector'. From the early 1990s 'the ACE sector' became increasingly linked through policy to the provision of vocational education and training. ANTA's establishment and its responsibility for the vocational side of the ACE 'sector' (MCEETYA 1993, p.7) led to a spate of research activity which attempted to measure and rationalise ACE programs across States and Territories. Kelly and Goldsworthy's (1993) mapping and documentation of ACE activity across Australia anticipated uncovering '... a rich lode of vocational and training activity hidden from national knowledge' (Kelly & Goldsworthy 1993, Foreword), a reference which might offer some guidance as to the intentions of its researchers or its funding bodies.

Throughout the decade researchers have documented and only partly overcome the limitations of national data related to ACE activity (Crombie 1996a; McIntyre 1996; OECD 1996; Kaye Schofield and Associates 1996b; Dryen & Schofield 1999; Campbell & Curtin 1999). Repeated efforts to arrive at a useable and standardised set of definitions for the sector have been a constant problem for policy-makers. Kelly and Goldsworthy (1993) were the first to comprehensively document this problem nationally.

At the end of the decade it was taken as given among researchers that ACE does not sit easily in any national data collection framework, and that for various reasons, much ACE activity goes unreported through a lack of sufficiently flexible statistical definitions as well through a lack of incentive for ACE providers to be burdened by data collection.

At the end of the decade it was taken as given among researchers that ACE does not sit easily in any national data collection framework, and that for various reasons, much ACE activity goes unreported through a lack of sufficiently flexible statistical definitions as well through a lack of incentive for ACE providers to be burdened by data collection. The creation of the National Education and Training Statistics Unit in July 2000 provided some hope for improved education and training statistics more amenable to placing other education and training, as well as ACE , 'within a wider context of social and economic information' *(Campus Review,* 21 June 2000, p.5).

The desire for statistical firmness and clarity can lead to an unconscious jettisoning of the ACE sector's less quantifiable elements. At worst, it can lead to a spiraling distortion of reported or recognised activities and policy emphases. It can also, as Bagnall (1994) and others have noted, feed into a particular conceptualisation of educational 'goods' where all values and benefits are vested in individual learners. In many ways current quantitative research necessarily neglects or overlooks the values in ACE practice which perhaps cannot be so effectively counted on a per capita basis, for example, the enrichment of the community in ACE through social capital (see Falk, Golding & Balatti 2000).

The benefits and problems of quantitative research and measurement are exemplified in recent, national ACE research. Dryen and Schofield (1999) attempted to develop a framework for measurement of key performance indicators in the ACE sector while at the same time capturing the diversity of ACE, its outputs and outcomes. They proposed a common data set for the national reporting of ACE teaching and learning outcomes which could simultaneously meet accountability requirements, provide a basis for resource allocation and assist systems and providers to 'self-measure' and self-improve.

Dryen and Schofield's (1999) strategy was to limit 'definers' to VET-style measurements. Supported in their methodology by a majority of the project's steering group, they explicitly rejected broader indicators (for example, the development of social capital), suggesting that definitions of educational indicators should be restricted to outcomes for individuals. The need to quantify makes it more likely that valuation will be student-based; that is, that the individual will be the primary vehicle for assessment and evaluation. Students themselves become the key beneficiaries and individual benefits dominate.

some 'mapping' approaches

'Mapping' adult and community education is a reasonably recent research trend in ACE. It has its origins in the *Come in Cinderella* report (1991) which anticipated that each State and Territory would separately define ACE. Such mapping, albeit using diverse definitions, remains the only viable way of approximately scoping ACE nationally. These mapping exercises have been prompted and managed by States and Territories and funded by ANTA. Such exercises, while difficult to undertake rigorously, have been particularly illuminating in States or Territories where the formal ACE 'sector' has been poorly developed or conceptualised, and in some cases not recognised as ACE *per se,* even by the participants.

This method of research clearly has limitations. By using a survey approach which accepted everything identified by providers themselves as 'adult or community education' (including TAFE, university and private and commercial providers), the South Australian ACE mapping exercise (Path-finder Directory 1996) resulted in an extensive, if arguably over-inclusive, encyclopedic directory of sites in which adult learning takes place.

The Western Australian mapping approach (Barrera & Robertson 1997) was more critically focussed and research-driven, but was hamstrung from the outset by a contested (and somewhat fluid) understanding of what ACE is or should be. While it resulted in a report that identified the broad scope and contribution of adult and community education in Western Australia, it highlighted the limited and variable relation between ACE and VET. It also clearly located (but did not resolve) that State's understanding of ACE in relation to other States and Territories. Similar mapping or scoping exercises were under way in 2000 (Borthwick et al. 2001), including in Tasmania (OVET 2000), Northern Territory and Queensland (DETIR 2000c). Western Australia was developing a database of ACE providers in 2000 as an outcome of the Barrera and Robertson (1997) research (Barrera pers. comm.).

Qualitative research has been used with some success in ACE contexts to 'bring out the detail'.

some qualitative approaches

'Qualitative, or field research, is done mainly through the methods of participation, observation, interviewing, analysis of texts and documentation' (Funnell 1996, p.191). Qualitative research has been used with some success in ACE contexts to 'bring out the detail'. By contrast, purely quantitative studies illustrated in the previous section have tended to elicit broad trends across sample populations. The results of qualitative research have typically been written up in the form of: case studies or 'portraits' (for example, Gribble & Grant 1992; Timmers 1997; Falk, Golding & Balatti 2000); model or pilot projects (for example, BACE 1996b; Bottomley & Howells 1998); evaluations (for example, Thompson, Noble & McFarlan 1995); surveys (for example, Kelly & Goldsworthy 1993) or reports (for example, ACFEB 1997d). In some cases, qualitative research is written up in the form of good practice guides (for example, Childs 1997; Pobega & Russell 1999).

The use of qualitative research goes well beyond the start of the decade. Kimberley (1986) is a good example of the qualitative ACE research genre that uses 'warm and compelling stories'. Gribble and Grant (1992) used detailed studies of individual learners in ACE literacy programs to present 'a sustained picture of individual experiences' (p.5). The narrative method employed, based on taped transcripts from twelve learner informants, allowed a 'blending of inner and outer sets of reality' (Gribble & Grant 1992, p.7) as each learner struggled with literacy learning. ACFEB (1994), Bradshaw (1995) and the five studies in McIntyre, Morris, Foley and Tennant (1995) are examples of the use of narrative in ACE research from the middle of the recent decade, while Falk, Golding and Balatti (2000) is a very recent example.

There is a tendency in some education research, including some ACE research, for data to be treated as either qualitative or quantitative. In the ACFEB research forum (ACFEB 1997b, p.28) participants were urged to think of both forms of information as a continuum, not as distinct categories, and as complementary aspects of a much larger research process. There has been an increasing trend in ACE research over the decade towards using both forms of research in this complementary way. Some examples include Ducie (1994) and Kaye Schofield and Associates (1996b).

Finally, but by no means least, there is a strong and wide body of independent, largely university-based, academic research about ACE specifically, and adult education more broadly, written descriptively from a variety of disciplinary bases, including education, philosophy, sociology and public policy. Such research by individual authors tends to create a coherent and ongoing corpus of work around particular agendas or emerging themes. The most widely published collections of Australian and international ACE research in this category have been produced by McIntyre (see References) and Bagnall (1994, 1996).

the scope of ACE

> *We have claimed the territory … as ours and ours exclusively …*
>
> *We all know, however, that ACE doesn't stop with those boundaries. Indeed it flourishes a bit like Patterson's Curse in Neighbourhood Centres, Community Health Centres, Community Arts Organisations, Specific Purpose Organisations.* (Traynor 1996, p.86)

ACE nationally

Mapping exercises co-ordinated by State and Territory adult and community education authorities and funded by the Australian National Training Authority (Borthwick et al. 2001) confirm that the definition of ACE and the extent to which ACE activity is linked to the publicly funded VET system varies greatly among Australian States and Territories. In summary, there is no simple way of defining a coherent national ACE 'sector'.

Australia splits more or less in half on the matter of State and Territory funding specifically for ACE (Borthwick et al. 2001). Four jurisdictions funded ACE in 2000. Two of these States (New South Wales and Victoria) funded a widely recognised State co-ordinated and supported, sectoral form of ACE. Essentially, it comprised a network of community-owned and managed providers organised on a regional basis. Two other States, South Australia and ACT, provided funding in 2000 for ACE programs in a very devolved network of community *providers* with minimal central co-ordination. The other four State and Territory jurisdictions only funded non-VET *programs* delivered by TAFE, or approved VET *programs* delivered by registered training organisations.

Crombie (1996a, figure 1, p.52) proposed what he called a four-way split of ACE into a 'first and second division' in ACE. Our revision of the typology proposed by Crombie is suggested in figure 2.

figure 2: **Australian ACE and TAFE typology (after Crombie 1996a, figure 1, p.52)**

well-developed community ACE provision	**minimal support for community ACE provision**
State-supported and co-ordinated ACE sectors Victoria New South Wales	**Recognised ACE provision including TAFE** Western Australia Queensland Tasmania
well-developed systems of community provision South Australia Australian Capital Territory	**ACE not recognised *per se*** Northern Territory

Crombie's hierarchical mental map remained indicative of the situation in 2000, although since 1996 the 'reasonably well developed system of community provision' described by Crombie in Tasmania had been largely folded into TAFE. Also the 'pretty small' ACE provision noted by Crombie in ACT appeared large for its population base in 2000. ACT might now be seen to have joined South Australia, with its well-developed system of community ACE provision. By 2000 Tasmanian ACE tended to resemble Queensland and Western Australian ACE, where what was recognised as ACE provision was also located in TAFE. While there is much community-owned and managed non-TAFE provision occurring in the Northern Territory, particularly in Indigenous communities, ACE remains unrecognised per se. An outline of recent research in each of these diverse State and Territory ACE contexts is presented in the following chapter.

national ACE taxonomies

To the early 1990s, ACE enjoyed what Crombie (1993, p.7) called a relative absence of 'constrictions of the formal system in relation to curricula, methods and accreditation'. Its philosophy of engaging 'with the whole person ... from a learner-centred perspective, which emphasises the quality of the learning process, rather than the assessment of explicit outcomes' (Crombie 1993, p.7) worked well on the ground in ACE. Crombie observed that by 1993, ACE was finding the sudden 'policy and program preoccupation with VET a little hard to cope with' (pp.8–9). ACE's answer was to ignore the dilemma about what ACE was and to look at other ways of defining its outcomes, in particular its 'vocational outcomes', by arguing for a wider definition of both 'vocational' and 'outcomes' (McIntyre, Morris & Tennant 1993).

The 1991 Senate report sidestepped the emerging need for a simple or coherent definition of ACE. It proposed a multi-layered typology that distinguished

ACE from other sectors by the overlap between ACE as a philosophy, and ACE as a user-pays, flexible, open and non-compulsory form of adult learning. However as McIntyre (1993) pointed out, 'A taxonomy by definition must place items in one category only and there must be no ambiguity' (p.14). McIntyre noted that some of the problems in past ACE research had come from trying to define providers in terms of their learners. For this reason, McIntyre proposed a classification of ACE '... based simply on the kind of organisation providing courses' (p.15), not by their types of courses or their students, nor by their supposed motives for learning.

... practical problems arise in policy, planning and resource allocation settings when ACE is used loosely and interchangeably to describe a group of clients, a learning philosophy, a category of provider, an educational sector and a type of course.

Nevertheless, McIntyre (1993) acknowledged the value judgements implicit in such a classification. In particular, he noted that the proposed classification assumes and highlights that:

> *... differences are amongst providers. This classification highlights such matters as the funding base, whether courses are provided for private gain and whether the provider is community based.* (McIntyre 1993, p.15)

McIntyre (1993) placed considerable importance on the need for a rigorous definition of ACE: 'It is not just an academic, boundary-drawing exercise. But a boundary has to be drawn or the notion of a 'sector' is a complete nonsense' (p.15).

McIntyre acknowledged that drawing the boundary conservatively limited the notion of ACE provider to a 'formally organised course giving and course taking activity'. He stressed that:

> *... the great beauty of this restriction is that through our 'mapping' we can begin to open up how adult and community education relates to other organised activities in the society, and the sweeping social and economic changes.* (McIntyre 1993, p.15)

McIntyre's proposed definition of ACE was not adopted. Three years later Kaye Schofield and Associates (1996a, p.11) noted that ACE still referred in Australia, at once, to a type of course, a type of organisation, and ethos and a sector of provision. Schofield also observed that practical problems arise in policy, planning and resource allocation settings when ACE is used loosely and interchangeably to describe a group of clients, a learning philosophy, a category of provider, an educational sector and a type of course. As McIntyre and Kimberley (1998) noted in a national ACE study, these ambiguities are unhelpful and have the potential to be confusing. This confusion also flows through ACE research.

While accepting that no precise definition of ACE will work across all States and Territories, the national policy on ACE (MCEETYA 1997, pp.7–9) proposed some defining features of ACE: that it is learner-centred, responsive to community, accessible and inclusive, diverse, varied and flexible. One difficulty, and one noted by MCEETYA, is that this definition might also be applied to varying degrees to the other three sectors of education (schools, VET and higher education). In some States, ACE *sensu stricto* is seen in a more limited way: as only that learning which occurs in an accepted network of community-owned and managed providers. This definition, however, begs the question of how community should be defined (ACFEB 1997a), and whether the receipt by community organisations of outside systemic funding becomes a secondary criterion for defining ACE.

While the acronym 'ACE' stands for adult and community education, not all adult education is community education and not all community education is for adults. ACE as generally (but not universally) understood in Australia defines the area of overlap between both; that is, education for adults, usually in community contexts. At this point, the simplicity of ACE from outside the sector, as well as within the ACE research, disappears.

Attempts to 'map' the complex field within ACE are not new. In 1996 the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (AAACE 1996) attempted to develop a 'working map' of the diverse parts of ACE in Australia. Like all maps, AAACE recognised that their typology—of around 25 types of ACE (such as adult basic education, higher education, Indigenous education, open learning, prisoner education, professional continuing education and third age learning)—was a contestable 'simplification of a highly complex and dynamic reality'. AAACE recognised fourteen other relevant national associations with interests in particular areas of ACE. A research consolidation of all these ACE types, although beyond the bounds of the current research review, would provide another and quite different layer of understanding about this diverse 'sector'.

Adult and community education beyond the ACE sector are also diverse. ABS (1998) suggested that:

> *ACE programs were those vocational and basic adult education programs and activities which fall* outside, *but complement, the* formal *vocational programs offered by* educational *institutions.* (ABS 1998, p.85 [our emphasis])

However research (for example, Falk 1998) shows there is no clear demarcation between what is a formal or an informal program, and what is an education or other learning organisation.

The attempt to define ACE by default as 'other than formal or educational' is widely regarded as unhelpful. It has parallels in 'throw-away' definitions of further education in the UK as 'everything that does not happen in schools or universities', and effectively puts ACE at the bottom of what Kennedy (1997, p.1) described as 'a carefully calibrated hierarchy of worthwhile achievement, which has established routes and which privileges academic success well above other accomplishment'. Kennedy observed an '... appalling ignorance amongst decision-makers and opinion-formers about what goes on in further education' in the United Kingdom, much of which was alien to their experiences. This observation has clear parallels with the Australian ACE.

The attempt to define ACE by default as 'other than formal or educational' is widely regarded as unhelpful.

Another approach is to arbitrarily regard ACE as non-vocational in contrast to VET. Not only is this arbitrary characterisation inaccurate, it also begs the question of whether university is also ACE. This non-vocational/vocational split is best seen as an attempt to define and manage the other sector in its negative image.

Many of the definitional problems stem from ACE's extensive reach. Through its tradition and history of being so accessible and so diverse, ACE has been so many things in so many contexts. By being so accessible, ACE is also difficult to define neatly or to demarcate from other forms of adult learning.

In summary, two opposing processes have been occurring concurrently in terms of ACE taxonomy nationally. On one hand, ACE is often portrayed, by default, as being beyond the ambit of government policy or funding, since it is also commonly seen as 'other', 'outside', non-formal and even non-educational (ABS 1998, p.85). On the other hand, as McIntyre (1995a, p.182) argued, there has been a widespread '... restructuring of public sector organisations including adult education authorities to create leaner, meaner and more managerial government', combined with an emphasis through ANTA on ACE's vocational function in order to better respond to the imperatives of the global economy. The accuracy or otherwise of arbitrary, national, definitional inclusions and exclusions is therefore much more than an academic exercise and clearly needs some analysis as well as ongoing research.

national approaches to ACE in the research literature

The 1991 *Come in Cinderella* report (Senate 1991), as Hawke and McIntyre (1999, p.21) noted, '... recognised ACE as an extremely diverse sector with substantially different philosophical and structural histories in various States and Territories'. The Senate report recognised an inadequacy of university ACE research 'both within academic institutions and outside them' (p.154). It suggested this inadequacy was '... exacerbated by, and in part attributable to the lack of a national data base or even nationally consistent statistics, where these exist at all'. It also called for a more 'rigorous and analytic approach' to documenting achievements in ACE.

The accuracy or otherwise of arbitrary, national, definitional inclusions and exclusions is ... much more than an academic exercise and clearly needs some analysis as well as ongoing research.

In summary, the Senate report recognised ACE research in Australia at the start of the 1990s as:

> *... ad hoc, often undertaken in isolation from and in ignorance of other studies ... generally inadequately reported, poorly funded and rarely translated into better practice. There is no ongoing collection even of the most basic data concerning patterns of participation and who is providing what, let alone to what cost.* (Senate 1991, p.157)

Further, it considered that without such research, '... the sector will be condemned to a marginalised existence and Australia will have failed to capitalise upon a potent education and training network' (Senate 1991, p.157).

The call for more research in *Come in Cinderella* was strengthened and encouraged by the creation of a national VET framework through ANTA in 1994. The MCEETYA ACE Task Force began assisting with ANTA-funded research into ACE, primarily undertaken by States and Territories. Late in 1995 AAACE conducted a 'Review of research and development in the adult and community education sector' which summarised research between July 1992 and 1995 (Foreman 1995). Because of perceptions about duplication of research effort, the review also sought protocols for the dissemination of future ANTA-funded research projects and for clarification of the relationship between ACE research and the adult community education national policy on ACE (MCEETYA 1993). That policy had identified the need for 'appropriate research and evaluation to support the further development of ACE', including regular collection of appropriate quantitative and qualitative data, action/participatory research and a research clearing house, a need which has now been met.

The first Cinderella report led to the NSW ACE sector-initiated research in 1993 by McIntyre, Morris and Tennant (1993) and an ACFEB-managed national study of outcomes and pathways in ACE (ABS 1995). A series of similar outcome studies around the middle of the decade funded by BACE (see BACE 1995, 1996) attempted to firmly position ACE in NSW within the training reform agenda. ANTA funded the *Think local and compete* study by Schofield and Dryen (1996), which flagged the parameters of ACE in VET. It built on, but did not replicate the recently completed Kaye Schofield and Associates (1996b) *ACE–VET: Is it delivering?* research in NSW. Schofield and Dryen encountered some of the same definitional problems identified by previous research, and concluded that that the sector did 'not lend itself readily to national analysis' (Schofield & Dryen 1996, p.iii).

In an appendix on 'Statistical issues', Schofield and Dryen (1996) acknowledged these definitional problems in more detail, revealing that their report and conclusions were unavoidably based on an over-reliance of quantitative data from Victoria and NSW. 'National' data had been collected for the first time after the decision in 1995 to include ACE in the NCVER-co-ordinated AVETMIS (Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Systems) data collection. However, the scope of its ACE collection varied according to what was recognised, quite differently, as adult and community education in different States and Territories. In summary, as Schofield and Dryen pointed out, in some instances TAFE was included as part of the ACE sector and in others it was not.

There was a surge of commissioned ACE research in 1996–7 extending beyond the previous researchers and the 'eastern seaboard', including Socom (1996), Sharpe and Robertson (1996), Coventry and Higginson (1996), Alt and Beatty (1996) and Schwencke (1997). A report by Kelly Associates (1997) formed part of the preparation for a revised national ACE policy (MCEETYA 1997). The research activity included the *Beyond Cinderella* Senate inquiry and report (Senate 1997), which became a 1997 sequel to the 1991 Senate report. The 1997 report was being prepared for publication as the MCEETYA national policy, adult community education (1997) was committing itself to increasing the amount of, and widely distributing published data on ACE outcomes (p.25) and collecting and publishing consistent national ACE data.

The 1997 Senate committee considered that the research data and analysis of participation had gradually improved since 1991. The committee had access to new national research and data in its deliberations. It made what it regarded as an 'important finding' primarily on the basis of that 'new' information: that the ACE sector was a 'segmented market', rather than a homogeneous one. The committee recognised the potential in the new data for mapping connections between groups of learners and fields of study, helping identify 'non-participating groups' and 'target areas of need' (p.41), research it acknowledged was under way at that time through ACFEB in Victoria and BACE in NSW.

The published volumes of Senate inquiry transcripts from 1996 and tabled documents themselves comprise an important and rich body of analytical and descriptive ACE research. In 1996, the *Beyond Cinderella* committee cited Allie Clemans saying that: 'If one thing has changed since the early 1990s it is that the distinction between providers, in terms of ACE and TAFE, no longer is highly useful, on the grounds that ... the vocation aspect of education ... remains common in a variety of sectors' (Senate 1996, p.200). This issue of vocational outcomes from ACE became particularly pertinent in commissioned ACE research during the 1990s as governments of all persuasions looked for increased educational performance and efficiencies from all educational sectors.

Throughout the decade governments continued to insist on an historic, simple distinction between vocational and non-vocational adult learning based on program content rather than on learner intent. This insistence has important and ongoing implications for what kind of education and training is recognised, valued and publicly funded. It also has significant implications for which parts of adult education did and did not attract the goods and services tax (GST) after its introduction in July 2000 (Senate 1999).

Key performance indicators for adult community education (Dryen & Schofield 1999) took the ACE debate about vocationalism well beyond the traditionally recognised interface. It incorporated an argument (and indeed weighed up the costs and benefits) of adapting VET performance measures to ACE '... to provide a better indication of the outcomes of VET, ACE–VET and other general education programs' (p.29). Dryen and Schofield (1999) also anticipated emerging research recognising the contributions of ACE to community learning inclusive of social capital (for example, Falk & Harrison 1998; Kilpatrick 1999; Winter 2000) as well as in ACE (Falk, Golding & Balatti 2000). Dryen and Schofield surmised that:

> *... ACE is claiming broader outcomes than skills characterised by qualifications, employment or further study outcomes. In this claim it is saying something about adding to the stocks of social capital.*
>
> (Dryen & Schofield 1999, p.28)

ACE by **State** and **Territory**

States and Territories have different ACE histories. The previous section used research to begin to illustrate the national diversity of ACE across Australia, and identify why ACE to 2000 could *not* be regarded as a coherent national sector. This section teases out the diverse ways in which ACE *might* be understood as a sector *within* each State and Territory.

Several reviews of ACE data collections by States and Territories were conducted in the decade to 2000, the most comprehensive being *Hidden from view* (Kelly & Goldsworthy 1993). The executive summary to their survey suggested that 'well over a thousand' organisations were 'seriously involved' in ACE nationally. Kelly and Goldsworthy concluded that ACE provision was far more extensive than the scope of the current national collection. They also found that collection of participation data in Stream 1000 (general adult education) courses was often treated as irrelevant, even in TAFE contexts. Their findings were in many ways supported by NCVER's mapping team in 2000 which used national data collection statistics to identify some 950 ACE provider locations nationally. The team noted however, that such collections tended to understate the provision of ACE by failing to recognise providers who did not submit returns (Borthwick et al. 2001).

A published summary of how ACE was (and was not) funded in each State and Territory to 2000 was included in Campbell and Curtin (1999, p.28, table 2.8, adapted from Senate 1997). Campbell and Curtin's (1999, p.13) table 2.3 is reproduced as figure 3 below, since it contains a succinct summary of sources of reported ACE statistics, highlighting the effects of different funding arrangements. An 'All' column has been added to highlight that the available national data includes minimal State or Territory agreement in relation to inclusion to data from any of the seven ACE provider types. In summary, NSW and SA ACE data were comparable and broadly comparable to Victorian data, as were Queensland and Western Australian ACE data. All other State and Territory data were reported so differently in 1997 that they were neither comparable to each other, nor to the data from the south-eastern, mainland States.

figure 3: summary of ACE national data to 1999 (after Campbell & Curtin 1999)

provider types*	Vic	NSW	SA	WA	Qld	Tas	NT	ACT	all
ACE centres	YES	YES	YES						3
Adult secondary							YES		1
AMES	YES					YES			2
Community access	YES	YES	YES						3
TAFE	YES			YES	YES				3
Universities							YES		1
Public ACE providers						YES		YES	2

note: *ACE Centres: community-managed organisations specialising in provision of adult education; Adult secondary: course for adults provided by secondary schools; AMES: Adult Migrant Education Services; Community access: community-based centres providing education as one of their services (e.g. neighbourhood houses); TAFE: personal enrichment programs; Universities: personal enrichment programs; Public ACE providers: managed by public authority.

source: Borthwick et al. 2001

Borthwick et al 2001 had undertaken extremely detailed but unpublished ACE comparisons by June 2000. Their report provided a national overview of ACE to 2000 in a succinct, though complex, tabular summary. It included definitions of ACE, formal ACE policy statements, main ACE advisory bodies, ACE strategic plans, key ACE stakeholders, funding arrangements and ACE data currently collected.

Some research, by sampling ACE in several sites across State and Territory borders, found other more direct ways of comparing ACE. Barnett and Wilson (1994), for example, undertook a study of four diverse providers of ACE in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. All were at that time 'undergoing significant diversification of program provision to encompass courses with a specific skills basis and a vocational orientation' (p.69), with dilemmas including a loss of 'traditional identity of provision of general and adult education'. Golding and Volkoff (1999) and Volkoff, Golding and Jenkin (1999) also found ways of drawing interstate 'ACE' samples, in the latter case in Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria in their research into the vocational nature of ACE programs generally, and VET in ACE programs in particular.

ACE internationally

While the focus of this research consolidation is on Australian adult and community education, it is important to reflect briefly on international perspectives that have informed Australian perceptions of ACE and Australian ACE research through the last decade. The first observation is that the association of 'adult' education with community education to form 'ACE' is not universal across international boundaries, and is in part an Australian conceptualisation. Tennant (1990) elaborates on how ACE in the USA and the United Kingdom means adult and *continuing* education.

Many effects of international thinking about adult learning are evident in Australian research literature during the decade of the 1990s, and vice versa. Bagnall (in progress 2000) is conducting a comparative policy review of the contribution of ACE to vocational outcomes across five countries: Australia, India, Fiji, Philippines and Thailand to be published through UNESCO. The process of development of the further education curriculum framework by the Adult Community and Further Education Board in Victoria during 1997–98 drew directly on international literature. The methodology included consultative workshops in response to a discussion paper that summarised critical issues emerging from the widespread literature review (ACFEB 1997a).

... the association of 'adult' education with community education to form 'ACE' is not universal across international boundaries, and is in part an Australian conceptualisation.

The resulting document, *Transforming lives, transforming communities* (Bradshaw 1997, 1999) shows strong influences on vision and key ideas from international literature across the globe including Europe (Delors 1996; UNESCO 1997a, 1997b, 1997c; Nordic Council of Ministers 1995), the United Kingdom (Mayo & Thompson 1995; Kress 1995; New London Group 1996), the United States of America (IIPPREA 1997) and Asia (UNESCO 1991).

The research into the transformational strengths of the ACE sector for individuals and communities conducted by Falk, Golding and Balatti (2000) drew on international thinking about social capital in their development of a theoretical framework to underpin analysis of ten 'community portraits'. In particular, this framework referred to the work of Putnam (1993), Fukuyama (1995), Portes (1998), Woolcock (1998) and Putnam (1999).

Much of the ACE tradition, and some of its research traditions derive from United Kingdom adult and further education literature. The Further Education Funding Council of the UK set as one of its main aims, promoting 'access to further education for people who do not participate in education and training, but who could benefit from it' (FEFC 1997, p.1). Further education was seen to be the core to much vocational training, an avenue for enrichment and ongoing learning for those who have already benefited from education, an alternative route for those who are unable to access other forms of education and a 'second chance' for those who previously missed out or failed in the mainstream education channels. FEFC 1997 emphasised the view of the majority of further education providers: that learning provides a weapon against poverty, enhances employability, equips people with the capability to exercise choice and responsibility to become active citizens through gains in confidence as well as in knowledge and problem-solving skills. Thus, learning, social cohesion and economic goals were seen to be clearly linked.

Further, the inherent process of interaction within education contributes to the sharing of wisdom and understanding and promoting tolerance in society. This report pointed to the value of bringing 'learning to learners wherever they are' (FEFC 1997, p.8). It cited 'family rooms in primary schools, libraries, betting shops, snooker halls, rooms above pubs, or shopping malls' as suitable venues to involve people in relevant learning with their peers in environments which feel right to them. It also argued that 'all types of learning are valuable' and that the concepts of 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' learning are losing their validity. If one considers that all types of learning are valuable, then this view 'challenges the belief that "training" (for work) and "education" (for life) are easily distinguished' (Brown 1995, p.9).

The UK white paper, *Learning to succeed* (SSEE 1999), proposed new arrangements for education and training dependent on shared responsibilities between government, individuals, employers, providers and communities. In particular, it looked to local education authorities and communities to support and extend adult community learning and sought their contribution to local learning partnerships (p.15). Acknowledging that much of previous traditional learning provision had been unsuited to the needs of learners, this paper recognised that many adults are seeking to learn in informal self-directed and flexible ways. A new Adult Learning Committee will advise on: national learning targets for adults; strategies for increasing and widening participation; issues of accessibility; approaches to transition for those returning to study; and work-based learning (SSEE 1999, p.26).

Some of the international comparisons have been made directly through comparative research. Brown (1995) suggested that the issues and debates in both Germany and in the UK community colleges were very similar to those in the Australian adult education community. According to Klaus Meisel of the German adult education association (Brown 1995), despite the fact that there had been debate over whether adult community education centres provided vocational education, all German government-run adult community education centres 'conduct vocational education. Indeed they were established for the purpose of providing education and training for workers who missed out because of an inadequate and elitist school education system' (p.85). In Australia, providers had also taken up VET provision in response to learner needs and embraced the opportunities that this has provided. Brown (1995) concluded that in Germany, as in Australia, the field's rhetoric, the theory, lagged behind the practice.

Some parallels with Australia are available from Scandinavian research where there is a long tradition of devolved and community-owned and managed service provision. Sweden, for example has played a prominent role in the development of international adult education, recurrent education and continuing education thought. Colardyn (1998) suggested that recurrent education, distinguished by its 'second chance' character had evolved into a more encompassing concept of education and training—lifelong learning. A parallel trend has been the growing acceptance of diverse learning settings and frameworks. The non-formal sector has increased its share of provision of learning opportunities and thus influenced the share of the education and training financing (Colardyn 1998, p.4).

Strong and reciprocal parallels are also to be found across the Tasman. Tobias (1996) explained the 'fourth sector' description of the adult and community education sector in New Zealand and drew its boundaries to include 'forms of learning which occur beyond compulsory schooling and beyond highly structured formalised learning' (p.41). The Adult and Community Education Association (Aotearoa/New Zealand) adopted the following definition in 1994:

> *Adult and community education refers to organised learning activities that groups or individuals undertake for their personal, community, cultural or economic development. It touches all other areas of learning but its primary focus is the adult as learner and the community as context.*
>
> (Tobias 1996, p.42)

This definition emphasised programs that are short-term, part-time and not profit-making for the provider. Notably, it stressed the measurement of outcomes 'in terms relevant to the needs and aspirations of participants' (p.42). The traditions in New Zealand of linking adult and community education with social and political movements and of seeing it as a broadly based social movement itself were still alive at the end of the decade.

A number of emerging themes in international forums are likely to shape future thinking about the role of adult learning generally, and lifelong learning in ACE in particular. At a three-day conference in Warsaw in February 2000, forty-three nations from Europe and North America redefined national approaches to basic education to set the foundations for lifelong learning in the developing information society. They adopted a 'framework for action' which noted that, 'As society is rapidly changing, each person needs lifelong education' (EFA 2000). Further, the framework emphasised the need for basic education to be updated and its availability to be extended beyond the traditional confines of childhood and formal classrooms. It pointed to the need for collaborative involvement of schools, families, communities, civil society, social services and political authorities particularly for previously excluded groups in education.

... ACE differs in Australia according to where it is located.

ACE as ...?

It is clear from discussions earlier in the chapter that ACE differs in Australia according to where it is located. This section examines several different, positive ways of defining ACE in Australian research in a manner independent of State and Territory boundaries. They are ACE as a sector, provider type, cause, course type, form of adult education practice and form of community-embedded learning.

As mentioned earlier, there was a separate tendency earlier in the decade for some ACE definitions to be cast negatively 'in terms of what is excluded rather than included'. This theme was picked up in NSW research by Brown, Gillam and O'Connell (1994, p.2), who pointed out that ACE had '... been seen as that which is *not* TAFE or university, *not* accredited, *not* formal, *not* vocational'. Chessell (1996, p.211) also saw Australian community and adult education as the 'fourth sector' [not school, TAFE or university, consistent with Brown, Gillam and O'Connell's (1994) objection] with a 'special responsibility in this post-modern, segmented world to *unite* education'. However Chessell stressed that the idea of lifelong learning as applied in ACE emphasised:

> *... the cross-generational, cross-methodological and cross cultural boundary approaches needed to encompass the new areas of knowledge that have 'come in' with 'Cinderella, the fourth sector.* (Chessell 1996, p.211)

ACE as a sector

It would be convenient for national and State/Territory governments if ACE were an easily definable, discrete sector and widely understood by participants across Australia like schools, universities and TAFEs. McIntyre (1999, pp.2–3) traced the genesis of this 'ACE sector' construct, 'from its adoption in the national professional body that fused different adult and community education interests, the creation of the Board of ACE and the ACFE Board in Victoria', to its use in *Come in Cinderella* (Senate 1991). McIntyre (1999, p.3) further argued that the use of the term 'sector' to describe ACE is part of what he called 'skilful management of the reform environment by bureaucrats who positioned the sector advantageously'.

ACE as an organisation or provider

Robinson and Davis (1997) surveyed the state of adult and community education nationally in 1997 and recognised a number of different ways of conceptualising ACE. They defined ACE from the outset as an organisation, in particular 'organisations which specialise in provision of short education programs to adults in Australia', comprising 'community adult education centres, neighbourhood houses and workers' educational associations (WEAs)' (p.2). They acknowledged that by adopting this definition, it would be biased towards the 90 per cent of the Australia's 514 'registered community education organisations', located in Victoria and New South Wales and counted in NCVER national data collections (NCVER 1997).

Within Australia, only in New South Wales and Victoria is ACE widely regarded as a category of community-owned and managed provider. ACFEB (1999a) defines ACE essentially as a community-owned and managed organisation. In Victoria it is viewed as an incorporated organisation with a major focus on providing educational programs to meet the needs of adults, managed and responsible to the community and not for profit. The definition excludes TAFE institutes, universities, commercial or industry providers (ACFEB 1999a, pp.5–6).

This apparently simple ACE definition also has some ragged edges. All States and Territories have numerous community-owned and managed organisations that are primarily or partly adult or community education providers in their daily function, but which are not necessarily recognised as ACE. Some community-owned and managed organisations, even in ACE sector States, operate adult and community education programs out of TAFE institutes or campuses as well as from buildings owned by local governments, churches, service or sporting clubs. Some TAFE providers offer ACE programs through community organisations with ACE or TAFE staff. Some community organisations, while primarily service oriented, such as rural fire brigades, sporting clubs, churches and Landcare organisations, as well as health, migrant, women and aged care centers, have a strong community or adult education focus but do not necessarily identify as ACE.

ACE as a cause

ACE, as outlined earlier, is sometimes defined as a learning cause, an ethos or a set of adult or community learning principles. Robinson and Davis (1997) suggested that the *Come in Cinderella* report provided a focal point for the 'ACE cause' in contemporary Australia. Crombie (1996a, p.55) regarded the ACE 'cause', which he argued 'came out' with Cinderella in the 1991 Senate report, as a two-edged sword. He suggested that while the 1991 Senate report gave visibility to ACE as a cause, 'We've been struggling ... ever since ... to try and map our sector onto the administrative map of sectors [that is, schools, higher education, VET]. In a way, 'sector think' has become a block for us' (Crombie 1996a, p.55).

... definitions of ACE sub-fields are far from rigorous, simple or fixed, and many differ across States and Territories.

ACE as a course type

While Robinson and Davis (1997, p.2) preferred an organisation-based definition for ACE, they suggested that 'ACE the educational experience or ACE the product is about the characteristics of what programs ACE offers. In effect, ACE programs are the short course and personal enrichment programs...'.

Some research has focussed on the nature of programs and sub-fields assumed to lie within ACE. Again, definitions of ACE sub-fields are far from rigorous, simple or fixed, and many differ across States and Territories. At the start of the decade in 1991, AAACE (1991, pp.24–5) identified and defined four major sub-fields within ACE: adult basic education, general or liberal education, job or occupational education and training and public education. This typology was based on several overlapping criteria, such as field of study, learner intention and skills. Around the middle of the decade, AAACE (1996) had defined around 25 ACE fields, which did not specifically include the 1991 fields of general, liberal or public education, but included new and emerging ones such as health and well-being, open learning and volunteering.

Other researchers assume a particular type of course program is ACE. ACE has certainly been one of the most visible sites (but not the only site) in the community for literacy (often called 'adult basic education' or 'adult literacy and basic education'—ALBE) and language education courses. If research on ACE as a course type were included in the current review, the literature would be voluminous.

ACE as adult education practice

ACE providers are often a part of loosely coupled, but often tightly networked, community-based organisations where ACE practice is learnt by volunteers and practitioners on the job rather than in formal settings. For these reasons, much ACE practice tends to be experienced and shared rather than formalised through training. At the same time increased attention is being paid to the professional development needs of co-ordinators and tutors, with accredited training qualifications required for the provision of some courses. Given that some researchers see ACE practice as the sector's distinguishing feature, what might the commonalities in ACE practice might be?

Frustrated by the failure of ACE to convert from 'Cinderella as a cause' to 'ACE as a sector in the 1990s', Crombie (1996a, p.55) for example, suggested some commonalities in Australian ACE practice. In particular, he suggested that ACE practitioners 'know the difference between a setting that will nurture learning and one that will kill it off'. Crombie specifically suggested that ACE practitioners have a 'common core of professional interest in the processes, theories, concepts and practices of adult learning'.

The title of Victoria's quarterly ACE magazine, *ACE Practice,* embodies this assumption about ACE as a form of professional practice. Indeed, ACE sector authorities and stakeholder groups place considerable emphasis on information, including research, which is disseminated in a format that makes it 'a rich resource for tackling the everyday questions' (*ACE Practice* 1, 1999, p.1).

Similar practical principles flow through the common use of research to produce 'good practice guides' in ACE (for example, Whyte 1994; Bishop, Gillchrist, Hockings & Jones 1995; Bradshaw 1995; Clemans & Rushbrook 1997; Boughton & Durnan 1997; Wilkinson 1998; Pobega & Russell 1999). This applied or action research puts practice at the heart of research. Such practical guides (for example, ACE VIC undated) are premised on a dynamic approach to continuous improvement—in effect 'looking at what you are doing now, identifying what improvements could be made, making the change, and reviewing your actions at a later date' (ACE VIC undated, p.ii).

As such, the conceptual elusiveness of ACE as outlined in the national research literature does not necessarily flow through to ACE as practice in adult and community learning contexts. Research consistently shows that ACE has an holistic and practical intent: it meets the diverse needs of learners in a widely dispersed system of community-embedded adult learning. In this sense, the difficulty of ACE being neatly defined and boxed can be seen mainly as a bureaucratic rather than as a practical problem. As one of our research reviewers noted, 'Just because you can't define something across Australia doesn't mean it doesn't exist and work, or that you can't research it' (Rachel Robertson). Or as another reviewer noted, 'Being difficult to define might be a good and healthy sign for long-term survival, especially at times where neo-liberal policies govern so much of education's visions, goals, policies and practice, not to mention the contemporary rhetoric. ... ACE is certainly alive and well, but probably not writing reports' (Elaine Butler).

> ... learning in ACE connects people to each other and to communities in ways that no other sector does.

ACE as community-embedded learning

As suggested earlier in this consolidation, valuable formal, informal and non-formal adult and community learning exists and takes place in community contexts outside, and in many cases well beyond any of the above characterisations of ACE. Some of that community learning is formal and associated with preparing community members for service as volunteers, such as in voluntary fire services and 'meals on wheels' organisations. Some of it is about participants in community organisations learning informally and non-formally. As the Falk, Golding and Balatti (2000) and the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (CRLRA 2000) research showed, much of what is learnt in ACE providers *per se* goes well beyond the 'program participant'. In effect, much formal and informal adult learning occurs within, and on the edges of community organisations that lie outside most ACE surveys. Such adult and community learning is rarely recognised, measured or valued.

the **scope** of ACE **in summary**

ACE research reveals an irrefutable coherence in ACE practice, particularly at the level of adult learner experience in community-embedded contexts. The research shows that ACE can be distinguished by its commitment and ability to provide a seamless mosaic of learning opportunities for adults. ACE embraces and connects vocational learning, learning for life effectiveness and also learning for enjoyment and leisure. Finally and importantly, learning in ACE connects people to each other and to communities in ways that no other sector does. In these senses, ACE is held together by its commitment to and ownership by the community as well as by its distinctive approaches to adult learning.

Research confirms widespread, effective and cost-efficient learning in community contexts in ACE in all its forms. That comparable national 'data' about such learning are difficult to separate, measure and compare in relation to other forms of adult learning is an issue beyond ACE practice. Important and valuable adult learning takes place in ACE, with diverse and valuable outcomes and contributions. While ACE-type learning can clearly take place in TAFE and other adult learning contexts, it works particularly well in community-owned and managed situations and contexts where learners feel at home but where other education and training sectors do not go or do fear to tread.

That said, ACE research has not retreated to the idea that its inherent diversity and relative immeasurability is a reason for ACE not to be accountable. Nor has it defined all sides of ACE in romantic (essentially white, middle class, missionary) terms. While ACE has sides that remain independent, wild and wonderful, other sides conform closely to better known institutional and commercial learning models. There are numerous definitions of community and at least as many forms of ACE. It is ACE's combination of practical traditions, community connections and adult learning diversity which constitutes the essence of ACE.

Beyond that essence, this chapter has stressed the important fact that the identity of ACE lies in the eye of the beholder. ACE, from a learner perspective, provides the capacity for effective and holistic learning in community contexts. ACE's cause, the typical ACE provider and the typical ACE courses are all distinguishing characteristics of ACE from that learner perspective. Having said that, for the purposes of resource allocation, governments have a need to decide on ACE's heartland, and particularly its boundaries. Governments develop public policies which define and specify which providers, sectors and courses it will and will not fund.

Indeed, the biggest problem identified by this research consolidation is the difficulty of reconciling these two different perceptions of ACE for quite different purposes. On one hand, ACE is a diverse adult and community learning network whose essence is not amenable to simple definition or boundary setting. On the other hand, ACE is at least in part, a publicly funded form of educational provision and for the purposes of rationing of public funding, requires definition and boundaries.

who participates in ACE?

> *The lack of research coupled with the absence, or inadequacy, of consistent statistics limits the knowledge the sector has of itself, restricts its capacity to understand the role that it plays in Australian society, and limits its ability to demonstrate to government its cost effectiveness and its claim for adequate levels of government funding.* (Senate 1991, p.154)

reasons for researching participation

Attempts to improve measures of ACE participation have been accompanied, and in part motivated during the decade, by a growing concern for vocational outcomes, a more precise 'sectoral' definition of ACE and improved ways of measuring and reconciling ACE 's diversity. In the wake of concerns expressed in *Come in Cinderella* (Senate 1991, Recommendations 18 to 20, p.xii), the imperative to improve ACE data was specifically seen as '... important In the development of an accurate measure of the vocational education and training effort in Australia' (Kelly & Goldsworthy 1993, Preface). Improved data on who participates in ACE was seen as '... an important plank in the construction of a more coherent national training system' along with improved data 'on training activity, outputs and outcomes' (Kelly & Goldsworthy 1993, p.5).

It would be too easy to see this desire to research and measure VET in ACE as purely an externally imposed, national one. There had also been a desire by many ACE providers and sub-sectors to show that what they already accomplished had value in conventional, vocational terms and should be recognised by appropriate policy, planning and funding. The problem remained, however, that counting ACE required deciding how the boundaries were to be set for the purposes of statistical collections. As already shown (figure 3), each State and Territory defines these boundaries differently, and reports data in different ways.

The dilemma for ACE in the 1990s was that in an environment of increasing national accountability, evaluation and reporting, ACE continued to exist as a very diverse and widely dispersed sector. In such a loose form, participation and outcomes were difficult to measure. Schofield and Dryen (1996) noted that there was no agreed definition of ACE in Australia. Comparable and reliable national participation data were not available at that time to underpin major quantitative analyses. Even in 2000, the NCVER research group commissioned to document the extent and nature of ACE activity was unable to arrive with any accuracy at nationally consistent figures (Borthwick et al. 2001).

As Campbell and Curtin (1999, p.13) summarised, 'documentation on the limitation of data related to ACE activity is extensive' (see Crombie 1996a, 1996b; McIntyre 1996; OECD 1996; Schofield & Dryen 1996). The 1993 *Hidden from view report* (Kelly & Goldsworthy 1993), in its 'Setting the boundaries' findings (p.83), concluded that there was: a huge number of ACE providers; a lack of State/Territory or provider infrastructure to support data collection. They also found problems with data comparability and a lack of understanding of the process and its relevance or importance at many levels. The report also identified problems of a different sort related to the multiplicity of bodies responsible for adult and community education and the large number of non-government (private) groups. At a practical level, there was little incentive for many smaller ACE providers, particularly those not involved in State or intra-State ACE networks, to be defined and counted in national participation surveys. In summary, there were good reasons, both for and against, for drawing a line around participation in community-owned and managed learning.

national participation measures

Knowledge of the true level of ACE participation would greatly assist governments trying to determine the 'sector's' national contribution and 'value'. The definitional difficulties about ACE make accurately gauging this knowledge difficult. This difficulty will be illustrated by examples at both extremes, both in terms of estimated number of ACE providers and levels of participation. At one extreme in terms of provision, ABS (1997) identified ACE delivery in only two 'community centres' in South Australia and Western Australia. At the other extreme the same study identified 413 ACE sites in Victoria.

In terms of participation, at one extreme ABS (1998, p.83) identified only 1.1 per cent of 1997 post-school VET enrolments in an 'ACE centre' nationally. A Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia survey in regional Australia (CRLRA 2000) identified that 18 per cent of adult, non-capital city respondents to a stratified national survey across seven sites had previously undertaken some study at an adult or community education provider. At the extreme, Western Australia's broad ACE sector definition included TAFE, other government, community and private providers, leading to an estimate that seven out of ten West Australians would have undertaken an ACE course in a lifetime (Evans 1995).

The most recent (Borthwick et al. 2001) national ACE mapping exercise reported that ACE in 1998 accounted for 582 000 participants served through 940 training locations. It estimated national ACE participation on the basis of these figures to be 3.1 per cent of Australia's adult population. These statistics were subsequently revised upward: published figures indicate that 591 550 students were estimated to have undertaken personal enrichment education and vocational education and training programs in ACE in 1998 (NCVER 2000b, pp.9–11). Because these statistics were restricted to ACE's involvement in activity currently reported to the National VET data collection, they significantly under-report the extent and range of ACE activity. The NCVER mapping exercise effectively highlighted and defined major 'gaps' in current formal reporting about participation in the ACE 'sector' as defined nationally.

Despite these difficulties, participation research played an important part of both Senate inquiries into ACE and helped shape national ACE policy.

Despite these difficulties, participation research played an important part of both Senate inquiries into ACE and helped shape national ACE policy. In 1991 a separate chapter of *Come in Cinderella* was devoted to 'special provision' for particular groups, while another looked at specific 'barriers to participation'. Alt and Beatty (1996) used data from the ABS (1995) survey and the McIntyre and Crombie (1995) report on *Who are Australia's adult learners* to identify who does (and does not) use ACE. By the time of the 1997 Senate report, there were fewer concerns about the wide diversity of social and occupational representation in ACE and more concerns about how to widen that representation even further.

There were particular concerns about ACE participation trends over the decade. Grounding national baseline data on ACE participation was difficult enough. Reliably estimating growth in ACE participation was doubly difficult. There was some (albeit contested) evidence that the recently hypothesised growth might have begun before the 1990s. Evans (1988), for example, conducted a national survey in which it was suggested that more than six out of ten Australians had participated in an adult education course, and that the 'average Australian' had taken about three courses (p.1). The study suggested that around one half of adult education participation to 1988 had been recent and in that decade.

However as Bagnall (1994, p.98) pointed out, the great bulk of this participation research is more limited, in that it is primarily descriptive of the numbers of adults attending, or more particularly, formally *enrolling* in courses of various sorts. It covers only *presence* in ACE, one of three types of participation, the others being *involvement* and *control*. Bagnall (p.102) suggested that this preoccupation with presence or absence can be related to the ease with which institutions and researchers can objectively assess, quantify and use such data as a dependent variable. Bagnall noted that by contrast, the much less common, though important research focus on participative involvement or control requires more:

> *... qualitative, critical, inductive interpretive or hemeneutic paradigms, with their emphases on subjective and inter-subjective definitions, meaning and understanding on the interpretation of experience, and on the interpretive validity of explanations.* (Bagnall 1994, p.103)

Kelly and Goldsworthy (1993) showed that national ACE participation estimates were extremely partial. In the middle of the decade McIntyre and Crombie (1995) acknowledged these severe problems with counts of national attendance and enrolment in ACE, and reverted to survey estimates of participation informed by a special, 1995 ABS *Population survey monitor*. The survey results were reported by ABS (1995). While not longitudinal and restricted to a questionnaire distributed to an ACE-centre-biased three-State sample, the survey went well beyond presence or absence in ACE. For the first time it also teased out some perceptions about broadly defined outcomes, pathways and benefits of ACE.

Comparative Australian research data about who participates in ACE, while widely recognised as problematic, were seen to be potentially useful. Bagnall noted that participation data had the potential:

> *... for identifying (and hence appropriately responding to): areas of redundancy or undesirable overlap ... areas of educational disadvantage or (relative) under-provision, preferred forms of provision, and unmet demand or 'need' for adult education.* (Bagnall 1994, p.88)

National participation measures were also a factor in establishing a national profile for ACE. The ACE 'sector' had, at least since the birth of TAFE 25 years ago and the rapid growth of universities since the 1980s, been characterised from without (and within) as the unknown, fourth *Cinderella* sector in relation to school, TAFE and university. Research in the form of comprehensive and comparable national participation surveys have been seen by some policy-makers and champions of the sector as *the* key to the sector 'coming out' (AAAE 1986).

Bagnall noted that such comparative data were:

> *... essential for the generation of a statistical foundation of knowledge which will make it possible to foster: greater political and public understanding of the field, equitable evaluations of program efficiency and effectiveness, greater public accountability in the field, improved co-ordination of provision, the design and implementation of new forms of provision, the generation (and evaluation) of appropriate national and state policy, and the undertaking of soundly-based empirical research.* (Bagnall 1994, p.88)

The difficulty was what to measure. Bagnall (1994, p.90) took a pessimistic view of the benefits of one-dimensional ACE 'measurement'. This view was consistent with many ACE stakeholders who saw ACE's diversity and its holistic nature as part of its distinctiveness. Bagnall argued that since Australian adult education was fundamentally and appropriately non-formal because its strengths are its diversity, flexibility and responsiveness, any 'successful' survey must satisfactorily answer a series of questions. These five research questions, summarised and extrapolated from Bagnall's account based within the discourse of adult education, are:

- What would be regarded as ACE?
- What measures of ACE involvement would be used?
- What sources of information would be used?
- What type of ACE sample would be used?
- What type of analyses would be undertaken and how would it be reported?

Bagnall argued against such a survey on the grounds that adult education would, by being so defined, lose its marginality 'and become part of the educational establishment'. Indeed, Bagnall saw such surveys as the '... greatest potential threat to the future of the field [of adult education]' (p.94), and alternatively suggested the need for qualitative surveys better able to respect the diversity, flexibility and responsiveness seen to be at the core of adult education. In the continuing absence of national agreement about Bagnall's first question and consequent difficulties defining appropriate measures of involvement, sources of data and appropriate sampling strategies, all 'national' surveys conducted in the 1990s have only been partial. Researchers have opted for different solutions to the fact of ACE's diversity across States and Territories.

Kelly and Goldsworthy (1993), for example, noted the extent of 'invisibility' within the sector, a feature highlighted in their *Hidden from view* title. They elected to use different authorities' own specific definitions of ACE to provide parameters for their measures of local ACE activity. In the light of subsequent researcher difficulties arriving at a standardised national definition of ACE, this pragmatic approach at least allowed the counting process to take place within a framework which acknowledged and respected the ACE provider's own understandings of the sector. Other researchers opted to focus national participation measures in particular areas of activity within the sector, such as the more visible VET programs (Schofield & Dryen 1996), for example, or leisure and enrichment courses (see NCVER 1999).

In the continuing absence of national agreement ... all 'national' surveys conducted in the 1990s have only been partial.

What researchers choose to count naturally affects the research findings. When presented in a broad-brush format for instance, the national ACE 'sector' emerges as one that is used most effectively or intensively by the better-off, educated and employed members of the community (Evans 1995), and particularly by women. The Australian Adult Education Survey conducted in 1994 for the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (Evans 1995) defined adult education as any non-formal educational experience (that had lasted at least eight hours) whether in school, university, TAFE, an adult education centre, community education centre, neighbourhood house, workplace, private provider, union or professional association, charity or volunteer organisation or government department. This very broad definition, although very difficult to measure using existing provider data, is in some ways reflected in MCEETYA's own definition of ACE coverage, which listed providers including:

> *... adult and community education centres and colleges, Workers' Education Associations (WEAs), TAFE Institutes, neighbourhood houses and community centres, churches and schools; and Community health agencies and aged care providers.* (MCEETYA 1997, p.9)

It is significant that this MCEETYA definition did not include university, while the AAACE survey did, which may account for why some surveys of the sector lead to an impression of the sector being 'middle class'.

Under current statistical collection arrangements, national ACE provision and participation is divided into several key areas: general adult education (personal enrichment courses), basic education and vocational education. In reporting on personal enrichment programs, NCVER (1999) noted that around 75 per cent of the 426 000 reported ACE participants were female, and over 60 per cent were located in capital cities. These findings reinforced conventional perceptions of this aspect of the sector. Indeed, Morgan's (1995) research in Victoria characterised the typical general adult education student as female, urban, young (ish), comparatively well-off and in possession of relatively high levels of cultural capital, being both familiar and comfortable with educational environments.

One problem with the Morgan and other surveys is that they were biased through their survey methodology towards literate, educated users. It is also likely that older, established and more formal ACE providers and forms of provision will attract less disadvantaged participants. All overview ACE research needs to be tempered by findings from a wealth of other research aimed at specific use of the sector, especially use by groups traditionally marginalised in education. Some of this research is teased out the sections that follow.

ACE research since the middle of the decade has focussed particularly on under-representation in ACE and pathways through ACE in order to facilitate wider participation.

Despite the overall typology in developed countries of adult education as white, middle-class and educated, it is clear from research that the Australian ACE 'sector', in its practice and in the nature of its adult learning in community settings, is able to provide positive learning experiences for a number of groups conventionally under-served by other education sectors. Ironically, these groups are often characterised in the research as featuring most strongly among 'non-participants', as discussed below.

research **to widen** participation

All education sectors are concerned about widening participation, and using research to facilitate such widening. ACE research since the middle of the decade has focussed particularly on under-representation in ACE and pathways through ACE in order to facilitate wider participation.

under-representation

Foreman (1995) observed that of the 57 participation studies from 1992 to 1995, none had focussed on under-represented groups in ACE. A number of studies subsequently followed on this theme of under-representation in ACE, or as Alt and Beatty (1996) put it, 'the inverse of the profile of ACE participants' (p.18). Alt and Beatty (1996, p.18) listed groups who traditionally do not participate in ACE. Most groups listed were also under-represented in other forms of education and training. Interestingly, Alt and Beatty did not list men as one of the under-represented groups, and also noted (without evidence, p.19) that 'Early school leaving was a trait common to people not participating in ACE'.

Logically, gaps in participation should be taken to refer to groups of adults who might use ACE as their most appropriate and preferred source of learning and training, but currently do not. It should not be broadened to include all adults whose education and training needs are currently well provided for elsewhere; for example, in schools, university or TAFE.

The *Beyond Cinderella* report in 1997 deliberately singled out 'the great under-represented' in ACE (Senate 1997, pp.49–62). The report noted that male ACE participants were 'heavily outnumbered by females' but did not include a section about men. Nevertheless, it did identify people with low levels of education, older people, the unemployed and Indigenous people as the main groups not participating in ACE in proportion to their position in the workforce or the population at large. However it noted that the reasons for this under-representation were not well known.

A number of research studies have focussed on perceived under-representation by particular groups. Bottomley and Howells (1998), for example, identified 'ten model programs successfully implemented by ACE providers in order to increase the participation in ACE of people from language backgrounds other than English' (p.5). Their study was premised on a 'managing diversity policy' then current in Victoria (OTFE 1996), which stressed the importance of lowering impediments to access, 'regardless of culture, age location, disability and disadvantage' (Bottomley & Howells 1998, p.6).

In endorsing a picture of the 'standard' ACE user as female, 'financially better off and better educated than the general population, employed in a skilled occupation and a committed lifelong learner', Campbell and Curtin (1999) argued that this suggested 'too narrow a focus' by the ACE sector. It also raised the question of whether a middle-class picture of ACE would hold up if there were an analysis of users by program type, distinguishing between, say Stream 1000 and basic education.

Campbell and Curtin (1999) also identified groups whose need for ACE-provided programs may be particularly acute. These included: manual workers; 'the unqualified'; unemployed people; sole parents; people in some ethnic communities (including Indigenous communities); older adults; people with a disability; adults with poor literacy levels; ex-offenders; 'the isolated' and 'the less well-off' (Campbell & Curtin 1999, p.4).

Unlike the dominant or typical ACE participant, these groups have been represented as educational under-consumers. Research into their under-participation suggests that factors such as lack of interest, family or work commitments or general lack of time tend to outweigh expressed barriers relating more to the provider or course itself (Campbell & Curtin 1999, p.4; Morgan 1995, p.viii). Research confirms that ACE offers these students a flexible mode of learning that recognises their distinct needs as learners. Much research in recent years documents 'good practice' provided for such students or explores means of extending that provision.

Recent research in Victoria, for example, has directed attention to the specific learning needs of particular groups currently regarded as under-served by ACE and by education systems generally. This research has often taken the form of documentation and evaluation of the good practice seen to be manifest in current programs (Hurworth 1996; Bottomley & Howells 1998; Timmers 1997; ACFEB 1997d). It illustrates instances where needs have been met by specifically targetted programs and highlights educational and learning practices which maximise accessibility of provision and appropriateness of learning styles and content to the needs of the individual or group of learners.

pathways

Research into 'pathways' in ACE takes a long-term view of participation and outcomes than one based on one program and one outcome. Pathways concepts (for example, Clemans & Rushbrook 1997; McIntyre & Kimberley 1998) have been informed by research into participation previous and subsequent to ACE participation. Interestingly, the pathways of students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups illustrate some of the more persuasive aspects of lifelong learning theory. Researchers have long warned against taking too narrow a view of students' original aims and intentions, or of foreclosing pathways through the imposition of inappropriately short time lines. Courses undertaken in ACE for recreational or social ends, for example, may well have vocational outcomes, whether through direct employment pathways or through movement into more overtly vocationally oriented courses (Senate 1991, p.140; AAACE 1991, p.91; Clemans & Rushbrook 1997; McIntyre & Kimberley 1998). This research confirms that outcomes for particular ACE students may take longer to emerge than those for students in school, TAFE or university.

It is also important not to arbitrarily assume that participation in ACE 'leisure and enrichment' courses equates to non-participation in vocational programs. Indeed, research shows that a majority of all adult learners, including the large proportion engaged in VET Stream 1000 courses, indicate that their key objective is to develop skills which could be used in employment, to build skills or to enable participation in further learning.

Over the course of the decade Australian researchers have documented the extended vocational scope of ACE, which overlaps VET in policy terms (see Schofield & Dryen 1996, pp.1–4) but reaches well beyond the boundaries of formal VET provision. Using a broad definition of vocational, McIntyre (1993, p.viii) reported that nearly two-thirds of ACE participants surveyed gave a vocational motive as their primary reason for participation in ACE. This finding was reinforced by subsequent sample surveys, which indicated that key objectives for most ACE participants included the development of skills which could be used in employment or the building of skills to enable participation in further learning (ACFEB 1994, p.9; McIntyre & Crombie 1995).

Both skill-building and involvement in lifelong learning imply pathways. ACE allows disadvantaged learners to develop their skills and capacities at a pace that suits their own social and developmental needs (AAACE 1991; Barnett & Wilson 1994, p.3; Volkoff, Golding & Jenkin 1999). The use made by disadvantaged learners of the 'space' in ACE to acculturate, focus, map out and follow pathways into employment, to engage with or undertake longer-term study is well-documented across all States and Territories (TDE 1999; Clemans & Rushbrook 1997). Such pathways are less in evidence in other more formal sectors, where specific accreditation and credentialling requirements to be undertaken within set times for specific vocational purposes make this individualised and customised process much more problematic.

research into ACE **user groups**

Most research in ACE into user groups outlined in this section has been directed at one particular group. There have been some exceptions. BACE (1996b) undertook a number of 'model projects' in ACE which trialled and documented approaches designed to broaden the diversity in ACE in NSW. The overall project was focussed on a number of 'special needs' groups in different locations and provider contexts, including people with a disability, Indigenous people as well as and geographically isolated and older people.

One of the important issues it identified (BACE 1996b, p.5) was 'The extent to which providers should cross-subsidise participation by special needs target groups from fee-paying students', including mainstreaming. This had been also been a major issue in Queensland ACE delivered in TAFE contexts (Osborn 1998, pp.21–3). Similar, descriptive case study approaches have been used to study and document particular user groups in particular provider contexts in regional Victoria (for example, Timmers 1997).

In 1999 BACE was producing region-specific *ACE community profile* kits (BACE 1999), which by 2000 were to be annually updatable (Octarine Educational 2000). Towards the end of the decade Victorian and NSW ACE participation data were being widely and regularly disseminated, broken down by various user groups as well as by region.

Most national and State ACE research confirms that women clearly outnumber men as learners and workers in ACE. This phenomenon is historic and ongoing.

research into women in ACE

Most national and State ACE research confirms that women clearly outnumber men as learners and workers in ACE. This phenomenon is historic and ongoing. ACFEB (1996d), for example, confirmed that 'Women have constituted 75 per cent of Australian adult education participants for the past 75 years or more but this has received very little strategic focus in research, policy and planning within the adult education field'.

The reasons associated with women's dominance in ACE have formed part of its research agenda. There are a number of references in the ACE and wider adult learning literature around the issues of pedagogy and gender, feminism, empowerment and action, in community contexts in particular (see NOWinFE n.d.). Much of the research literature is extensive and beyond the scope of the current review. It is generally underpinned and informed by women's and feminist perspectives. NOWinFE (n.d.) for example, argued that the training reform agenda being applied to ACE was underpinned by outmoded notions of work, training and employment, which were gender-biased and which further discriminated against women.

Johnson and Hinton (1986) in a national study concluded on the basis of female participation rates approaching 80 per cent that women 'almost own' Australian adult education. The *Beyond Cinderella* report in 1997 noted that women still accounted for around 75 per cent of ACE participants. It surmised that women had embraced the ACE learning culture for both 'leisure' and vocational programs, and considered that this trend would continue. It is possible to conclude on the basis of the research that ACE is profoundly oriented to the educational needs of women

While women, who comprise half of the population, rightly resent being submerged in research and policy under the category 'special needs', they have been disadvantaged in getting less access to vocational training in and external to the workforce. Women are also less likely to gain employer support for training, receive a smaller share of the training dollar and carry a higher proportion of the cost of their own training (ACFEB 1996d; McIntyre & Kimberley 1998). Once accessed, there is evidence that ACE courses can provide women with the means for attaining significant personal, vocational and further education goals (Williams, Searle & Bevan 1996). It is likely that the preponderance of women in ACE is related in some ways to the gendered nature of ACE learning and provision (Shore 1997).

Nevertheless the most comprehensive study of individual outcomes by gender (ABS 1995, pp.94–5) found few significant differences between males and females in terms of benefits *gained* from completing ACE courses. Males reported more improvement to their key competencies, whereas females reported gaining more personal, family and community benefits.

Consistent with these findings, Burrows (BACE 1996a, pp.35–41) suggested that women's intentions and involvement in adult learning went well beyond their own individual outcomes. Burrows argued that: 'It's clearly women in our communities who have been the traditional educators of children beyond the formal school setting and it is clearly women who maintain and support our communities' (BACE 1996a, p.37). Thompson (BACE 1996a, pp.24–38) argued that 'women's education needs to be controlled by women as students and teachers' (p.29).

research into people whose first language is other than English in ACE

Come in Cinderella devoted four pages (pp.98–101) to migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds in ACE. It noted that: 'Evidence on the outcomes of participants in the fourth sector by NESB migrants ... is very poorly documented' (Senate 1991, p.100). The *Beyond Cinderella* report (Senate 1997, pp.57–9) similarly included three pages about people whose first language is English. The 1997 report noted that:

> *... migrants continue to face multiple barriers to accessing education and training. ACE providers have the potential to make a significant contribution to*

> *improving NESB [non-English speaking background] participation, but there remain severe constraints on their capacity to provide the level of service needed.* (Senate 1997, p.57)

The 1997 Senate committee (p.59) concurred with the conclusion drawn by FECCA (1996, p.203) about the ACE sector's *potential* to meet migrants' diverse need. This included '... the provision of a *range* of English and other courses at the community level to cater to differential age, gender, economic, personal, social, familial and vocational requirements'. While people from non-English-speaking backgrounds are mentioned in a number of ACE studies and reported separately in ACE data and some small research studies (for example, West 1994), there remains relatively little definitive or major research within the mainstream ACE literature specifically about such participation.

Exceptions include Robles (1992), who studied cultural diversity in Victorian neighbourhood houses, and Bottomley and Howells (1998), who used pilot studies to explore strategies for widening the cultural diversity in Victorian ACE. The most comprehensive national analysis of ACE for people from non-English-speaking backgrounds in the decade is that found in FECCA (1996). That review (FECCA 1996, p.203) produced for AAACE concluded that, in 1996, the aggregate data on NESB participation in ACE masked perceived significant differences in participation by particular groups and ethnic communities. Similar effects were observed in the research review of NESB participation in VET (Volkoff & Golding 1998).

research into rural and remote people in ACE

There is very little research into participation by people from rural and remote areas in ACE. The issue of ACE and geographical isolation was dealt with in the first Senate report (Senate 1991, pp.124–7) but not mentioned in the 1997 report. The 1991 committee was 'very impressed with the contribution that can be made by groups such as neighbourhood houses and learning centres and in rural areas and small country towns'. (p.127). Saleeba (1992) summarised research into adult education in rural Australia and noted that its pattern of delivery was varied uneven.

Schofield and Dryen (1996, pp.A4.5–A4.7) briefly considered ACE for rural and remote communities in *Think local and compete.* Butler and Lawrence (1996, p.112), as part of a major study of VET in rural and remote Australia, concluded that the ACE sector 'plays a significant role in NVET [national vocational education and training]'. They also noted significant variations between States and Territories in that provision and concluded that the most appropriate organisational structure for education and training in non-metropolitan areas is based on co-ordinated cross-sectoral provision (Butler & Lawrence 1996, p.124). Campbell and Curtin (1999, p.24) briefly mentioned 'anecdotal evidence of a strong and growing demand' for ACE by 'rural and remote Australians' but suggested that 'the lack of adequate data makes it difficult to estimate the potential need'.

The Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia has published widely on learning in regional communities inclusive of ACE since 1997 (Falk 1998; Kilpatrick, Falk & Harrison 1998; Falk & Kilpatrick 1999). CRLRA research has included consideration of informal adult learning communities in Australian regions and regional towns and explored links between social capital, community learning and community well-being, including research specifically in ACE (Falk, Golding & Balatti 2000). A BACE study was in progress in NSW (BACE 2000b) exploring structures for the delivery and co-ordination of rural ACE.

research into people with a disability in ACE

People with a disability in ACE are widely seen as an important group of participants within ACE. They were considered in both Senate reports (Senate 1991, pp.107–13; Senate 1997, pp.60–4). Research specifically about people with a disability in ACE includes Quaass and Fraser (1994), ANTA (undated) and Papanicolaou and Fitch (1995).

In 1991 the Senate Committee into ACE 'was unable to ascertain the number of people with disabilities who participate in ACE activities' (Senate 1997, p.60), but suspected that it was below their level of representation in the community. The 1997 Senate report noted that 'people with disabilities are virtually "invisible" amidst the data on ACE participation' (p.60). While many ACE programs are deliberately inclusive of people with a disability, the Quaass and Fraser (1994) study as well as Schofield and Dryen (1996, p.A4.11) suggested that many ACE providers had inadequate provision because of financial restrictions. DETAFE (1995) published a kit to facilitate further participation by people with a disability in ACE. Boote (1997) outlined some social and educational challenges for flexible delivery of learning in the ACE sector, and cautioned against using flexible learning for people with a disability without due consideration of its implications.

A number of research studies have focussed on the participation of people with particular disabilities in ACE. It included ANTA (undated) research into ACE for deaf and hearing impaired persons. Papanicolaou and Fitch (1995) identified barriers to access, provider needs and strategies for achieving optimised outcomes in ACE programs in Victoria for people with intellectual disabilities.

research into older learners in ACE

There has been a related and renewed policy emphasis on lifelong learning.

The 1991 Senate report failed to specifically consider the needs of older Australians. There has since been a widely documented trend towards customising learning for an aging population in Australia, a trend covered comprehensively in *Beyond Cinderella* (Senate 1997, pp.105–12) and in ACE research since the middle of the decade (McIntyre & Crombie 1995; Hurworth 1995, 1996; BACE 1996a, pp.116–10; ACFEB 1999h). There has also been a growing recognition of a widespread desire for learning over a lifetime (ANTA 1999; Dobson & Sharma 1998) as distinct from education or training generally. There has been a related and renewed policy emphasis on lifelong learning. These reinforcing trends have thrown into focus the importance of ACE for older Australians, as an alternative to paid work, as a community interest in retirement and well as for self-employment.

The 1997 Senate report noted a pattern of escalating interest and enthusiasm for participation by older people in ACE, and particularly in U3A (University of the Third Age) in Australia (Senate 1997, p.106). It specifically recommended research to guide and validate strategies to support such learning (p.109) and to explore the link between adult education and the well-being of older people. The Hurworth (1996) research in Victoria remains the most rigorous study available on learning for older adults. It included a study of benefits for, and barriers to this rapidly growing cohort of older people's participation in learning. The final edition of *Multiple Choice* (Issue 15) reported on the wide range of initiatives emerging for older learners at the end of the decade in Victorian ACE (ACFEB 1999h).

research into Indigenous ACE

Prior to *Come in Cinderella,* there had been very little discussion on ACE in Indigenous contexts in the research literature. At that time, the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education policy* only referred to ACE in very general terms, and then primarily from a perspective of access, equity and disadvantage (see Senate 1991, p.101). The 1991 Senate committee heard strong representations urging Indigenous community control of ACE provision. The report recognised that 'the potential demand for Aboriginal adult and community education is enormous' (Senate 1991, p.106).

Schofield and Dryen (1996) noted that the ACE sector '... as a network of providers was involved in delivering to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' (p.26), but considered that the question of their inclusion in the national VET framework was best considered by Indigenous people (p.27). The *Beyond Cinderella* report in 1997 anticipated an exponential growth in demand by Indigenous Australians for education and training. The extent to which this growth is reflected in currently reported ACE participation data is unclear. What is clear is that many Indigenous community organisations are community-owned and managed, are involved in ACE-type provision but are not counted as ACE in national participation data. There is a strong argument for increased recognition of Indigenous-controlled and managed organisations as ACE providers in their own right (Boughton & Durnan 1996, 1997). The ability and desirability of mainstream ACE to meet Indigenous-specific needs remains unclear.

Petheram (1994) researched barriers to Indigenous involvement in adult education in a NSW regional research study. McGinty (Cope et al. 1995, p.29), researching in a remote Aboriginal community perspective, argued that:

> *... adult Aboriginal education's sorry histories are seen in the legacy of short one-off programs that do not necessarily have educational or social outcomes (Harvey and McGinty 1988). The reasons for this are multiple but usually run up against misunderstandings of 'culture', 'community', 'mainstream' and 'language'.*
> (Cope et al. 1995, p.29)

Casey (1996) identified current provision and participation of adult education in an urban, Victorian Koorie community as including community providers. It regarded community-related courses with a practical focus as being particularly important. BACE (1996c) reported on the way in which the NSW ACE sector was working with Aboriginal communities in NSW to encourage Aboriginal people to use ACE as an entry point into further education, training and employment.

Boughton and Durnan's (1996) submission to the 1997 Senate inquiry again argued strongly for independently controlled, Aboriginal community provision of ACE. The Senate committee (1997, p.55), while not denying 'a role for non-Aboriginal ACE providers in Aboriginal adult education', identified a need for a change of perspective: from an essentially paternalistic 'access and equity' model, to one of 'a supporting role working with Aboriginal organisations as they assume control over the development, delivery and management of suitable programs'. The Senate report also suggested (p.55) that as much research effort should go into cases where ACE providers have *attracted* Aboriginal participants as goes into identifying cases where there is low participation in the ACE sector.

Ah Chee (1998) referred to the findings in relation to Indigenous ACE in the Senate (1997) report, and argued that '... there is an alternative model ... based on

Aboriginal community controlled organisations determining what the vocational education and training needs are in the region' (p.4). Ah Chee noted that:

> *Throughout Aboriginal Australia there are now several thousand Aboriginal community-controlled organisations ... often struggling with minimal resources, and they need the support of the VET system.*
>
> (Ah Chee 1998, p.10)

Ah Chee also suggested that the community-driven alternative was necessary '... instead of simply trying to slot us into the mainstream, industry-driven courses for the sake of so-called access and equity' (Ah Chee 1998, pp.11–12). Murriman (1998) also argued for a strengthening and legitimising of the links between ACE and VET and what they called 'the Aboriginal industry' to ensure the development and success of long-term Indigenous employment strategies.

Boughton and Durnan (1997) comprehensively reviewed themes within Aboriginal community-controlled adult education literature. They identified six main themes (p.iv): the contested nature of 'best practice' in Indigenous ACE; competing views of the nature of Aboriginal education equity; the relevance of international standards; the connections between adult education and community development; the specific role and importance of Indigenous organisations and the connections between Aboriginal culture, identity and pedagogy. Further (pp.30–1), they distinguished between 'mainstream' adult education provided for Aboriginal people and independent Aboriginal community-controlled adult education.

Boughton and Durnan (1997) also identified some best practice success factors derived from the research literature. Wilkinson (1998) similarly identified some critical success factors that contribute to successful delivery of ACE programs to Koorie communities in Victoria. McKinney (1995) had earlier identified a number of best practice aspects of ACE in Koori communities in NSW. At the time of the review Victoria and NSW had a comprehensive plan for widening Koorie participation in ACE (ACFEB 1999g; BACE cited in Stephens 1999). In 1999 the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group launched an 'Indigenous Action Plan for ACE' (see *Adult Learning Australia,* no.3, June 1999, p.26), which articulated BACE's '... commitment to improving educational outcomes for Indigenous people through their participation in ACE courses'.

Campbell and Curtin (1999, p.23) briefly considered ACE for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, citing the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's (CAR 1997, p.93) recognition of the traditional and continuing link between lifelong, education and Indigenous identity. By the end of the decade some State Aboriginal organisations (VAEAI 1998, p.9) were becoming directly involved in ACE research and identifying community 'expectations of ACE research in Victorian Koorie communities'.

research into unemployed people in ACE

Until the middle of the decade, when national labour market programs were fully developed and while elevated national unemployment levels were of particular community concern, ACE providers were an important site for many community-based programs targetted to unemployed people (for example, Skillshare and LEAP programs). Indeed, the 1993 Federal government discussion paper *Restoring full employment* (Commonwealth of Australia 1993, pp.83–4) recognised 'the role of ACE as a point of entry and "first step" for many adults'. An Australian Association of Adult and Community Education submission, which formed part of the government consultation process, was cited within that paper (see AAACE 1994). AAACE argued for an even wider role for ACE to provide generic skills (in particular, self-employment skills), to encourage lifelong learning and to act as an important stepping stone to mainstream education, particularly for unemployed people.

... the reduced focus on research into unemployed people in ACE at the end of the decade reflected changed national circumstances, in particular lower national unemployment rates and a deconstruction of most national labour market programs.

While ACE still served similar functions, the reduced focus on research into unemployed people in ACE at the end of the decade reflected changed national circumstances, in particular lower national unemployment rates and a deconstruction of most national labour market programs. However there was a growing emphasis at the end of the decade on ACE's role in addressing historically high, long-term and youth unemployment, as reviewed below.

research into youth in ACE

A number of factors contributed to an increasing interest in recent years in the potential of ACE to provide educational and other programs for young people, especially early school leavers. Fluctuations in retention rates to Year 12 nationally during the decade and rising levels of youth unemployment had the effect of 'raising the bar' for many people who had left school early. Their experience by the end of the decade was that potential employers were likely to ask for higher qualifications (CPET 2000). In addition, benefits attached to the Youth Allowance became dependent on young people's enrolment in some form of education or training. Case managers and schools were increasingly required to seek alternative educational settings for young people for whom school has already been shown not to work. Some research showed that ACE had in part met that need.

Some research has been undertaken in ACE in Victoria to address specific needs of young adult learners, especially those who had found considerable difficulties with the school setting. The *Young & ACE* research (ACFEB 1997d), for example, documented action research undertaken in the provision of adult education services to young people in Gippsland and in northern metropolitan Melbourne in 1997. Development of a youth-oriented ACE market was taking place on an ad hoc basis in a number of suburbs and country towns in Australia, again illustrating ACE's role in operating within communities and with a minimum of red tape.

Some barriers to young people's use of ACE were also identified in *Young & ACE*. Project workers in that research noted a lack of knowledge by youth of available ACE options, their possibly inappropriate behaviour and attitudes toward education in some ACE settings, as well as program inflexibility and irrelevance to young people. Of particular interest to ACE workers in this ACFEB (1997d) research was the distinctiveness of this group of learners. In many ways the young group diverged from the 'ideal type' of the motivated adult learner. The students were significantly younger, less likely to regard themselves as partners in the learning experience, and sometimes saw themselves as being in the program 'on sufferance'.

Nevertheless, it was felt in a 1997 Adult, Community and Further Education Board paper (ACFEB 1997d) that ACE could offer young people an opportunity for positive, supportive and effective educational and training experiences. Again, the programs worked on ACE's acknowledged strengths: flexibility and learner-centred provision. Indeed, the research showed that unemployed young people frequently could not see the future clearly enough, either financially or socially, to commit to full-time courses of twelve months or more duration. Shorter, flexible and appropriate ACE programs were therefore found to be vital (ACFEB 1997d).

Young & ACE (ACFEB 1997d) also identified a range of issues that would need to be addressed if youth programs were to be successful in the ACE sector. In particular, networks would need to be developed with other agencies dealing with young people. Marketing would also need to be done in schools and other areas to attract the target group. ACE would also need to work closely with secondary schools to ensure effective early intervention. Professional development would also be required for ACE staff addressing the needs of young learners. Chamberlain and Hughes (1998) subsequently evaluated a pilot program for young unemployed people in ACE in Victoria. More recently, the 1999 edition of ACE Practice (ACFEB 1999i) focussed specifically on the 'growing market' for youth in Victorian ACE. It included practitioner reports on the wide range of initiatives emerging for young learners in ACE at the end of the decade.

researching ACE and small business

Schofield and Dryen (1996) flagged a 'window of opportunity' (p.A3.12) for ACE providers to be more involved in small business. There had been many previous studies of ACE and even more on small business and training issues, but until 1997 there were very few specific studies of ACE *and* small business. The majority of previous research literature in the area of small business was associated with the VET sector. There have since been two major research projects inclusive of ACE (Kinnaird & Davis 1998, in NSW ACE; Clemans & Bradshaw 1998, in Victorian ACE). A third research project (Childs 1997) produced *A guide to working with micro and small business enterprises for adult educators and the VET sector.*

Nevertheless, a number of studies and data about ACE have confirmed a growing trend towards ACE business and computing programs as the most significant ACE course areas. Kinnaird and Davis (1998, p.xi) concluded that ACE was making 'a particular contribution to the short-course market for people working *in their own business,* in its own right and also relative to TAFE.' They suggested '... a sixfold increase [between 1993 and 1996] in business-related participation in ACE by people working in their own business, albeit from a low base'. Clemans and Bradshaw (1998) undertook qualitative research in six Victorian ACE providers to identify connections between women in small business and ACE. They documented the success and value of ACE to women in small business, particularly in the early stages of small business development.

ACE **participation** research by **State** and **Territory**

research into ACE participation in New South Wales

In 1992 the NSW Board of Adult and Community Education (BACE) began research into the State's adult education sector to determine the nature and extent of adult and community education. It was the first time that the extent of the sector had been examined in NSW, although the researchers emphasised that their work did not represent a 'conclusive study on this subject' (BACE 1995b). That research established that nearly one in six adults in New South Wales had undertaken an adult education course in the preceding year. Around one in 18 adults in New South Wales had undertaken their course at a sole purpose, adult education provider (p.2).

Throughout the decade much of the research in NSW adopted a strategic focus around three main themes: participation, vocationalism and concerns for inclusiveness in ACE. Much of the research has been influential nationally.

Throughout the decade much of the research in NSW adopted a strategic focus around three main themes: participation, vocationalism and concerns for inclusiveness in ACE. Much of the research has been influential nationally. Major research by McIntyre (sometimes with others) dominated the field in NSW. McIntyre (1993) pioneered thinking and research about alternative taxonomies in ACE as well as the vocational nature of ACE documented in McIntyre, Morris and Tennant (1993). Brown, Gillam and O'Connell (1994) in their *State of learning* report also gathered important preliminary information about the nature and extent of ACE participation in NSW.

As in Victoria, adult and community education has occurred in a variety of forms within NSW, both within the State Government-supported ACE 'sector' and beyond it. Peace (1994), for example, elaborated on the long and complex history of evening and community colleges of NSW, which by the mid-1990s were struggling with the dilemma of whether to concentrate on their traditional, non-formal approach to ACE or to meet the 'Fairy Godmother' and move towards financial independence by attracting Commonwealth funds for vocational programs and by providing high fee 'business' courses: in effect relying on the 'user pays' principle to carry them through (Peace 1994, p.13). No matter how well they were doing, their dilemma was that as long as they remained 'non-formal' they tended, along with the 'large network of neighbourhood houses and other community organisations' (Kelly & Goldsworthy 1993, p.19) not to be noticed or counted nationally.

AGB McNair (1995) surveyed participants in BACE programs in NSW in 1995 '... to enable current and future direction of adult education to be more objectively assessed' (p 2). McIntyre, Foley, Morris and Tennant (1995) comprehensively examined vocational outcomes of ACE in NSW. Alt and Beatty (1996) examined the theme of inclusiveness in ACE as a response to research that suggested some narrowness in participation. NSW was the site for a number of quality-focussed, best practice studies around the middle of the decade. The *Economics of ACE delivery* (McIntyre, Brown & Ferrier 1997) afforded insights into ACE delivery across NSW but also addressed equity considerations for the sector. The research suggested that funding arrangements then in place, including the imperative to 'market' courses and to apply user pays criteria, had adversely affected equity in the provision of ACE. The researchers noted that although demand for ACE could be shown to be linked to individuals' lack of post-school qualifications, the capacity to participate in ACE actually related more strongly to socio-economic advantage and higher-than-usual levels of qualification.

Sumich and O'Connell (1997) produced a NSW ACE customer satisfaction research report. There were sufficient NSW ACE data by the time of the 1997 Senate report (p.82) to have a good idea of an overall participation profile for that part of ACE included within the BACE network. There was also evidence that participation rates in ACE in NSW had grown significantly in the previous five years.

In 2000 New South Wales defined ACE as a particular type of community-owned and managed organisation. The comprehensive participation data collected through the Board of Adult and Community Education in the Department of Education and Training are now believed to be reasonably accurate.

research into ACE participation in Victoria

Like BACE in NSW, the Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB) has been very active in Victoria in attempting to clarify the nature of its client groups. Research in Victoria has followed some themes initially explored in NSW, but has more of a tradition with qualitative research, such as Kimberley (1986), Bradshaw (1995) and most recently Falk, Golding and Balatti (2000).

Analysis of participation by group has been a consistent theme in ACE research in Victoria. In 1994 'snapshots' of the sector in Victoria defined students as predominantly female and young, with women under 39 making up 44 per cent of the ACE population overall (compared with the 24 per cent made up by men of the same age). They were seen as well educated—48 per cent of students had a post-school qualification (ACFEB 1994). Data on employment status and income levels, however, showed ACE participants to predominantly have low incomes and be unemployed. Vocational motivation, in particular, preparation for work or for further study, was high on participants' lists of reasons for attending their courses.

Peters (1994) undertook a *Study of outcomes for students participating in adult education at the Council of Adult Education*. It identified that the reasons for participation as well as outcomes in ACE were commonly multi-dimensional, and that the major outcome from ACE participation was skill development of some sort.

In 1995 commissioned consultants (Morgan 1995) reported that eight per cent of all adults in Victoria could be categorised as participants in adult education in 1995, with a further 15 per cent reporting participation at some other stage. The estimated level of activity was significantly lower than that of ACFEB's estimate. Morgan's definition of participation covered literacy and basic education, English as a second language, general preparatory courses and the VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) for adults, together with vocationally specific education and training and general adult education. Importantly, it included all Stream 1000 enrolments, including multiple enrolments by the same individuals. Under this very broad definition, the most common client, both male and female, was, as in the NSW ACE research, seen as employed and well-educated. The research confirmed the influence and weighting of the 'general' course participants—easily the largest single group of ACE users in Victoria at that time. They were characterised by the research group as typically young (under 39), employed, high-income and socially aware (Morgan 1995, p.ii).

However, participation profiles for specific programs, including vocational education and training programs, access and bridging, the Adult VCE and English language programs, all diverged considerably from this profile. For these, most interest was expressed by adults with lower education levels, less developed literacy and language skills, and less engagement with the workforce (Morgan 1995, p.v). Fifteen per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Victoria, for example, were recorded as undertaking some form of community-based education, along with five per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (ACFEB 1996a).

ACFEB (1996e) responded to a discussion paper, 'The role of ACE in the implementation of the national VET system' by Kaye Schofield and Associates (1996a). The ACFE response 'identified women as ACE's major client group', and noted that '... attention is being given to understanding more about the reasons why this client group predominates and how its needs can be better met' (p.1). While ACFEB suggested that ACE was providing 'in particular ways for special groups such as rural communities, Koories and older people', it noted that 'only 23% of the adult community had ever participated in Government-funded ACE' (p.2). In the same year ACFEB (1996a) also examined and compared population characteristics for Victorian local government areas (LGAs) and provided a comprehensive overview of further education (including ACE) participation by region.

By the time of the Senate (1997) report there was evidence, as in NSW, of significant growth in ACE participation in Victoria since 1991. In 1999 a snapshot of the Victorian sector, based on ACFEB's own database, reported that the community sector enrolled over 80 000 students in further and vocational education and about as many again in short recreational (or Stream 1000) courses. Over two-thirds of those enrolled in the community sector's further education and vocational courses (Streams 2000 and 3000 respectively) were women. The Senate report concluded that while Victorian community education performed numerous roles, its age and gender profile, weighted in favour of mature-age women, showed that it was conditioned by particular social and economic forces. Indeed, ACE in Victoria tends to compensate for the withdrawal or exclusion of women from the paid workforce as occurs through the family cycle, but also through poorer employment and career opportunities (Teese & Davies 1999).

> In 2000, Victoria also continued to define ACE as a particular type of community-owned and managed organisation ...

These studies served particular purposes: they documented the reach and range of coverage within the sector and provided good aggregate pictures of participation. Under Victorian ACE's regional structures, it became possible also to provide regional breakdowns for ACE participation. In the interests of establishing whether further expansion of the sector would be needed or warranted, attempts were also made to gauge the nature of under-represented groups.

In 2000, Victoria also continued to define ACE as a particular type of community-owned and managed organisation, making ACE sector participation data collection through the State peak body (ACFEB) reasonably straightforward and reliable. ACFEB's *Taking ACE to the year 2000* (1999f) research strategy moved on to a range new research issues, including ACE's value and its diverse outcomes.

research into ACE participation in Tasmania

Defining ACE, and therefore ACE participation, is particularly problematic beyond the two 'ACE sector' States of Victoria and New South Wales. Tasmania had a separately defined ACE sector at the start of the decade. However, during the 1990s the sector was effectively folded into TAFE Tasmania though some adult education programs still take place outside TAFE. The NCVER ACE review (Borthwick et al. 2001) noted that Tasmanian ACE had historically been defined as programs that were situated in or administered by (the now defunct) Institute of Adult Education. However it noted that:

> *Restructuring of TAFE and the institute has meant that the Institute programs still exist in TAFE Tasmania but now fall within a program area called Access and learning. In the past Access and bridging courses (Stream 2000) have not been counted as part of ACE mostly due to the location of the venue [rather] than the content the content or client group.*
> *This problem remains.*
>
> (Borthwick et al. 2001)

... determining levels of ACE participation in Tasmania and conducting research on Tasmanian ACE was perhaps even more problematic at the end of the decade than at the start.

Research into ACE in Tasmania has been minimal. In 1999, ANTA funded a study of the way in which the 30 Tasmanian community houses 'could be further developed as centres of lifelong learning (TDE 1999, p.2). At that time, the community houses were primarily funded through the Department of Health and Human Services (for co-ordination as well as for childcare for users). However, program participation figures were not available for the educational programs, funded Statewide in some of the community houses, with only a total of only $50 000 from the Department of Education (Community ACE Grants program) distributed on a submission basis.

The TDE (1999) study included an exploratory comparison of the Tasmanian neighbourhood community houses with Victorian community centres, with a view to applying 'some of the findings of this exploration to the Tasmanian situation' (TDE 1999, p.6). The report concluded that the Tasmanian centres had the potential to develop as centres of lifelong learning, but that they '... lacked the legislative, policy, funding and administrative structures which underpin the role of Community Houses as providers of Adult Community and Further Education' (TDE 1999, p.17). By comparison to Victorian ones, Tasmanian centres were 'still largely informal and undeveloped' (p.18), '... operating in a policy vacuum' (p.18) with regard to their role as ACE providers and without '... ready access to the vast body of knowledge and practice that underpins the adult community education sector' (TDE 1999, p.19).

In Tasmania, data collected on ACE activity in 2000 were confined to adult migrant education services (AMES) and ACE providers managed through a public authority. Community-based providers were not acknowledged in statistical collections (Campbell & Curtin 1999). ACE in Tasmania, however, is now provided through TAFE programs (Borthwick et al. 2001).

A Tasmanian ACE mapping project was due for completion in June 2000. Its brief was underpinned by the Tasmanian Office of Vocational Education and Training's (OVET) 2000 definition of ACE as '... flexible, varied, diverse, inclusive, learner-centred, and responsive'. In summary, determining levels of ACE participation in Tasmania and conducting research on Tasmanian ACE was perhaps even more problematic at the end of the decade than at the start.

research into ACE participation in South Australia

ACE in South Australia ... over the 1990s had ... become subject to increasing uncertainty and ambivalence.

ACE in South Australia, 'characterised as *enrichment* or *leisure* programs', flourished in TAFE colleges/institutes during the 1970s and 1980s, but over the 1990s had '... become subject to increasing uncertainty and ambivalence' (DETAFE 1997a, p.2). DETAFE (1997a) suggested that: 'As a consequence of what was a policy vacuum, the provision of ACE was considered a low priority by a number of TAFE colleges (later institutes) and in some cases was seen to have no priority at all' (p.2).

At the time of the Kelly and Goldsworthy (1993) national survey of ACE data collection, the 87 South Australian community houses as well as the large Workers' Educational Association were excluded from the national data collection, despite their strong adult education focus (p.37).

An ACE council was established in South Australia under the *VEET act* in 1994. In 1995 Bennink and Blackwell (1995) undertook a four-State study of barriers to participation in ACE including and based in South Australia. A subsequent mapping project in 1996 funded by ANTA by the South Australian ACE Council aimed to 'raise the awareness and profile' of ACE in South Australia (Path-finder Directory 1996). Taking an extremely broad view of 'ACE' ('organisations with an "educational" aspect in their profiles' [Path-finder Directory 1996, p.1]), the report listed 324 of approximately 1000 South Australian organisations which fitted this sample selection criteria; that is, self-identified ACE providers which responded to the mailed survey. The largest respondent groups included 113 'community organisations', 56 community centres/neighbourhood centres, 51 private or commercial providers, 29 labour market organisations and 21 church organisations, TAFEs, adult re-entry schools, university organisations and social sporting clubs.

The estimated level of ACE participation as defined in the Path-finder Directory (1996, pp.1–3) was significant: around 350 000 people in over 14 000 courses, delivered by 3500 volunteers and nearly 2000 part-time instructors. Around one-third of all providers were registered to offer accredited curriculum. In 1996, 324 providers identified themselves as providing ACE services, including 100 funded through South Australia's ACE Council (Schwencke 1999).

In 1997, DETAFE (1997b) provided the 'first set of statistics on ACE' which conformed to the national AVETMIS standard and approximated NSW and Victorian collections. However, the data were more partial in that they applied only to 'enrolments in courses run by not-for-profit, community-owned and managed organisations', and specifically to those which had received some of their limited government funds through the ACE Council. The data excluded ACE in TAFE SA programs, university continuing education as well as adult education funded by other sources. As a consequence, they included only a fraction of the Path-finder Directory (1996) survey estimates in ACE as more broadly defined. Indeed, by using a more limited definition, the DETAFE (1997b) report found fewer than 4500 ACE students in less than 600 ACE programs.

In 1997, The ACE Task Force recommended that '... collectively, TAFE institutes be the major public providers of ACE programs within the State's VET sector' (DETAFE 1997a, p.4). Nevertheless, DETE (1998) encouraged and funded some adult education in the community with 'ACE grants' (totalling approximately $500 000). As in Tasmania, these grants were available on application by 'community based organisations wanting to provide education and training programs for community members who are not ready or suited to more formal avenues of education' (DETE 1998, Foreword). South Australia in 2000 also had an active Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association, whose providers were eligible for these grants.

In South Australia in 2000, ACE participation statistics were collected from community-based organisations specialising in the provision of adult education, from community-based centres providing education services as one of their functions and from TAFEs (Campbell & Curtin 1999). An ANTA-funded *Turning on learning communities* project was under way in South Australia (ANTA 2000). This included a literature search and model for the development of learning communities in South Australia. However, there was still no State-specific definition of ACE, beyond those providers actually in receipt of State funds, making the collection of ACE participation data and research into the sector an ongoing problem.

research into ACE participation in Western Australia

ACE in Western Australia in 2000 was partly located in TAFE, partly in a loose network of community providers called Learning Centre Link (LCL) and partly in other community-owned and managed providers of adult education.

Learning Centre Link collects national participation data from its network of around 70 community and neighbourhood and learning centres, but none of that data were reported nationally early in the decade. In 1994, the Western Australian Department of Training (WADOT) surveyed adult education providers in WA and found a need for better pathways, more information about student destinations and the need for an overview document detailing the ACE sector. In 1994, Ducie (1994) undertook a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analysis of participation and destination outcomes associated with activities at community neighbourhood houses and learning centres in metropolitan Perth. The report observed that almost half of centre members become volunteer workers. It not only observed increases in paid employment and self-employment through ACE participation, but also significant increases in involvement in further education and community activities. Towards the middle of the decade WADOT (n.d.) was openly acknowledging in its ACE publicity, *There's no limit to learning*, that it was 'difficult to define the precise boundaries of ACE', but suggested that a growing number of people were engaged in ACE programs.

ACE in Western Australia in 2000 was partly located in TAFE, partly in a loose network of community providers called Learning Centre Link (LCL) and partly in other community-owned and managed providers of adult education.

The Western Australian State training agency funds Learning Centre Link as the peak body for neighbourhood houses in Western Australia. It also funds TAFE ACE provision, offered on a cost-recovery basis. Some Western Australian ACE courses (known as Stream 1000) are offered separately from publicly funded courses in TAFEs and also in local schools. It can be argued that Western Australian TAFEs, semi-autonomous bodies with community boards of governance, are in some senses, like other ACE providers in Western Australia, to some degree community-managed.

The most comprehensive research into ACE in WA undertaken by Barrera and Robertson (1997) remains unpublished. It ascertained the extent and characteristic features of ACE as known in Western Australia, as well as its close and interlocking relationship with VET. Indeed, only TAFE colleges were listed as providers of recognised ACE services in Western Australia in 1997 (Campbell & Curtin 1999). This continued to be the case in 2000: Borthwick et al. (2001) reported that student details and enrolment data were only collected for accredited training funded by WADOT and for Stream 1000 courses delivered in TAFE colleges. LCL (1998a) separately reported 1999 survey data from 43 Learning Centre Link centres in Western Australia. The report, *Pathways from the centre,* provided a descriptive snapshot of diverse Western Australian participant experiences in neighbourhood houses and community learning centres that form part of Learning Centre Link network.

Nevertheless, *Beyond Cinderella* reported 80 community-based neighbourhood houses and learning centres operating in Western Australia. The Adult Learners' Association Week mailing list in Western Australia for 1997 contained 171 providers. The Western Australian sector was described as focussing on literacy and general adult education programs, as primarily self-funded and as heavily dependent on the contributed labour of volunteer tutors (Schwencke 1999).

In 2000, the Western Australian State definition of ACE was still partly tied to TAFE provision, through the Western Australian Department of Training's *Strategy for adult community education 1999–2001* (WADOT 1999), making comparative ACE research difficult. The strategy distinguished between the structured contexts where ACE is delivered in TAFE contexts and the local community learning centres. The strategy identified the promotion of 'learning communities' and 'learning for life' as its major goals, and encouragement of participation by long-term unemployed as a particular need.

research into ACE participation in Queensland

Queensland has had no history of co-ordinated, community-based ACE provision. As Osborn (1998, p.1) observed, the ACE sector in Queensland '... has been the true Cinderella of the National body'. During most of the decade TAFE colleges delivered what Queensland called 'TAFE Adult Community Education' (or 'TAFE ACE'), which has come to refer to 'fee-for-service short courses that attract students with both vocational and recreational goals' (DETIR 2000c).

ACE participation data in Queensland have been minimal and unreliable. Very little major commissioned or definitive research has been undertaken on the Queensland ACE sector. In 1993, no participation data were reported from the informal network of neighbourhood houses and community centres in Queensland or for their Commonwealth-funded literacy programs (Kelly & Goldsworthy 1993, p.32). A review of the delivery of ACE in Queensland (VETEC 1993) came out strongly on the side of continuing to consider ACE as non-accredited personal development programs and to wrap ACE within TAFE. It defined ACE in Queensland '... as stream 1000 courses only' (VETEC 1993, p.iv) and concluded that 'There is wide public expectation that adult and community education should be an integral part of TAFE TEQ offerings' (p.i). Nevertheless, it recognised that there had been 'inadequate management attention given to Stream 1000 activities' in TAFE contexts, which had minimised the presence and performance of ACE programs.

In 2000 Queensland still had no widely agreed definition of ACE, making research into participation and other 'mapping' exercises extremely problematic.

Parker (1996) reported on the relationship between ACE and publicly funded vocational education and training in Queensland. That report, like the 1997 Senate review (p.95), was conducted in a State context where the focus was 'unambiguously on the training market'. Nevertheless Parker found in Queensland what exists in all States and Territories—a wide range of non-ACE sector providers of non-formal education and training. The report estimated a ratio of formal training to non-formal training in ACE to be of the order of 1:10 in Queensland.

Osborn (1998), in the *Rags to riches* report, painted a picture of ACE in Queensland that pointed very much the other way. To carry on the *Beyond Cinderella* analogy, Cinderella in Queensland was not only to remain locked inside TAFE, there was also evidence that fewer participants were coming to the ACE 'ball'. The 'overall decrease' observed in ACE participation rates in Queensland ran counter to trends in other States, and was attributed 'in large part to competition from other providers' as well as from parallel programs offered by TAFE 'at more competitive rates'. The most disadvantaged learners, concession-card holders, suffered twice the rate of decrease in overall participation.

Towards the end of the decade there was a growing recognition that some community-based Queensland organisations were indeed delivering training (DETIR 1999a, 1999b) and that some adult education was perhaps better delivered to adults outside TAFE. DETIR, for example, undertook an ANTA-funded project (DETIR 1997) to address perceived serious barriers to training for equity groups at a local and community level (DETIR 1999a). Late in the decade, some funds also became available for the delivery of accredited or recognised short courses in what was referred to, confusingly, as 'the ACE sector'. In 2000 the Queensland State Training Authority was responsible for two such programs delivered by the ACE sector: the Community Literacy Program (DETIR 1999c) and ACE–VET (DETIR 1999b, defined as 'VET delivered by community not for profit organisations' (DETIR 2000c, p.31).

However, in terms of reported ACE activity, only TAFEs in Queensland are regarded as offering ACE programs and these are confined to personal enrichment programs. As Campbell and Curtin (1999) noted, the non-reporting of ACE data outside ANTA's scope and boundaries (that is, all non-VET, non-publicly funded activity) exacerbates the considerable under-reporting of adult education participation statistics. Indeed, in Queensland, over 500 community-based providers have been identified through the compilation of mailing lists (Schwencke 1999; Borthwick et al. 2001).

A Department of Employment and Training Queensland ACE mapping project was undertaken in 2000 (DET 2001), including a scoping study of ACE sector activities, delivery and data. The project brief (DETIR 2000c, p.3) noted that Queensland had '... not had the opportunity to develop adult and basic education in the same way as the eastern seaboard states'. It observed that as a result, ACE was provided by '... many government and community-based agencies, at most times fragmented or an ad hoc basis'. The Queensland brief in part addressed the recommendation in an ALA Queensland-sponsored research project (Schwencke 1999). Schwencke's report used a 'snapshot' approach comparing conditions and circumstances of ACE in two 'ACE sector' States and two other States (SA and WA). It looked in detail at a wide range of eclectic issues using a loose research framework. The report, ironically, did not consider Queensland ACE in the four-State comparison. However, the report suggested that there were '... no peak organisations offering membership and support services for ACE' in Queensland. Schwencke (1999) acknowledged significant issues in developing a coherent identity for the Queensland ACE 'sector'.

An ACE advisory committee to the Queensland Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission (VETEC) was in place in 2000 'to prepare a Queensland ACE policy and implementation plan' (DETIR 2000a). Its aim was 'to encourage community-based organisations to deliver vocational education and training to people who would benefit from the informal and supportive learning environments offered by the community-based organisation' (DETIR 2000b), but was conditional on that organisation being a registered training organisation.

In 2000 Queensland still had no widely agreed definition of ACE, making research into participation and other 'mapping' exercises extremely problematic.

research into ACE participation in Northern Territory

In 1993, Kelly and Goldsworthy found 'a wealth' of ACE 'activity' in the Northern Territory (p.27), including strong evidence of its existence outside the TAFE system (p.28), but virtually no data collected or reported nationally on participation. Further, they noted that those involved in what might otherwise be called 'ACE' in other States lacked involvement in ACE networks or associations and had no understanding of the national data collection system.

By 1997, *Beyond Cinderella* found 99 community-based Northern Territory VET providers apparently offering both accredited and non-accredited training, but still no ACE (Senate 1997, p.101). The NCVER (Borthwick et al. 2001) ACE scoping study found that little had changed. The Northern Territory, despite having a wide range of Aboriginal and other community-owned and managed organisations involved in adult learning, had no formal acknowledgement of ACE provision. In 2000, the Northern Territory did not distinguish between ACE and VET providers and had no ACE policies or funding. Its reported ACE activity was confined to courses provided to adults at secondary colleges, and to personal enrichment programs provided by universities (Campbell & Curtin 1998). It is important to note in a research context that, in the Northern Territory, as in some other areas of States where a significant proportion of the community is Aboriginal, the term 'community' has a widely understood Indigenous association, making survey-based participation measures particularly problematic.

In 2000, the Northern Territory did not distinguish between ACE and VET providers and had no ACE policies or funding.

An ANTA-funded (NT in progress 2000) mapping of the ACE sector in the Northern Territory project was under way in 2000, including compilation of a database of ACE providers. There was evidence of some future intention to promote ACE in the Northern Territory (Borthwick et al. 2001).

research into ACE participation in the Australian Capital Territory

The situation in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) in relation to ACE participation is deceptive. In 1993 Goldsworthy and Kelly (1993, p.11) found an active community ACE sector comprising over 90 different providers. The 1997 Senate inquiry found around 100 'ACE providers' and reported the (1996) formation of an

ACE Advisory Council (ACT VETA 1996). By 2000, ACT had adopted a 'lifelong learning'-based ACE definition and an ACE strategic plan.

However, as with a number of other States and the Northern Territory, in reporting ACT ACE participation data, AVETMIS understated the extent of provision. Only ACE programs provided through ACE providers managed by public authorities were reported to national data collection agencies in 1997 (Campbell & Curtin 1998). It is known, however, that extensive ACE courses are offered through secondary colleges in the ACT, and that the Canberra Institute of Technology is a major provider of 'second-chance' education. Community services organisations and neighbourhood houses also deliver a range of ACE programs (Borthwick et al. 2001).

By 2000, ACT had adopted a 'lifelong learning'-based ACE definition and an ACE strategic plan.

In 1998, the ACT Office of Training and Adult Education on behalf of the ACT Advisory Council on Adult and Community Education commissioned a research project to map the extent of ACE provision in the ACT, using funds from ANTA. *The Report on adult community education in the ACT* was released in 1999. By adopting a very broad definition of ACE, it identified over 300 ACE providers in the ACT, including private companies, secondary colleges and high schools.

international research into ACE participation

The research issues associated with participation in adult and community education, and particularly the issue of who should be encouraged to participate in lifelong learning, are international. As the concept of lifelong learning has permeated international adult education thinking and practice, its impacts and implications have become clearer.

The 1997 Further Education Funding Council report in the United Kingdom (FEFC 1997) proposed two ways of identifying groups which do not participate in learning and those who fail to achieve. The first follows the approach of 'equity target groups' common in both ACE and VET research in Australia to the middle of the decade. It involved identifying groups on the basis of specific characteristics such as gender, ethnicity or age. The second approach acknowledged the role which general characteristics, such as income levels and levels of previous educational achievement, play in access to and successful participation in learning. The UK evidence, like the Australian research cited above, suggested that it is those 'who are already well qualified who go on to earn more and to demand and get more learning' (FEFC 1997, p.21). By contrast, those who miss out or fail the first time, 'never make up the lost ground, educationally or economically. There are clear links between previous educational achievement and economic and social disadvantage' (p.22). Hence the emphasis within the FEFC report on widening participation—involving a wider cross-section of the population, not just increasing it.

The UK National Adult Learning Survey 1997 (cited in DEE 1998) found that 'non-learners'; that is, those who had not done any learning in the past three years, were more likely to be women, older, not in employment or in low-skill occupations and in lower socio-economic groupings. More than 80 per cent of these non-learners had left school at or before the age of sixteen and a similar proportion indicated that they were unlikely to undertake any future vocational or non-vocational learning. Indeed, half said that 'nothing would encourage them to do some learning' (DEE 1998, Appendix Section 6). In contrast to participation in learning leading to community self-confidence and capacity, the UK white paper noted that lack of access to adult learning leads to 'poverty of aspiration in a self-reinforcing cycle of decline' (SSEE 1999, p.60).

Brown (1995, p.8) undertook internationally comparative ACE research inclusive of Australian ACE. He suggested that although the approaches to adult education in Germany and Britain differed, there was agreement that 'too few adults participate in education and training following compulsory schooling'. In Germany, more than 14 million people participated in community adult education provided by the government during 1992 (Brown 1995, p.8). Non-government adult education providers offered education in addition to this. Brown reported that three times as many women as men participated in adult community education in Germany. However, German participants tended to be younger overall than those in Australia, although participation was generally more evenly spread, indicating a commitment to continuing learning.

Most participation studies in adult community education in New Zealand were undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s. These studies concluded that participants tended to be white, women, already educated for longer than average and with qualifications, with above-average incomes and mainly in full-time work (Benseman 1996, p.277). Conversely, those under-represented were mainly the 'marginalised'.

Belanger and Valdivielso (1997) in their comparative study of adult education participation in industrialised countries (USA, Canada, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland) reached similar conclusions. The benefits resulting from the 'explosion' of organised adult learning activities evident in industrialised countries were found to be unevenly distributed. Those who were already educated, employed, younger and male were more likely to be catered for. They therefore suggested that a 'dual learning society' was emerging and that participation in adult education is a 'cumulative social practice'. Those who already have, gain more and become more advantaged, those who lack initial education, participate less and accumulate disadvantage. A similar polarisation can be seen to occur between urban and rural regions and between industrialised and developing countries.

Research in adult education has moved away from interpreting the marginalised individual in terms of deficit, but rather moved 'towards considering these persons as active players in their own lives'.

As in some Australian ACE research late in the decade, UNESCO (1999) noted the value of qualitative methodology in research on participation, particularly in helping to understand the structural and contextual factors which affect participation and non-participation and the motivations which drive learners. It pointed to the need to not only determine who is and isn't participating, but also to interpret the cultural and social embeddedness of adult learning. Research in adult education has moved away from interpreting the marginalised individual in terms of deficit, but rather moved 'towards considering these persons as active players in their own lives' (UNESCO 1999, p.4).

Research on participation in the Spanish Research Centre for Adult Education (CREA) in Barcelona (cited in UNESCO 1999) used methodologies such as surveys, life stories, case studies and comparisons. While a big increase apparently appeared in demand for adult education, their research showed that organised learning was not evenly distributed among people of differing educational and social status. Parallel research on gender at the National Institute of Adult Education (NIAE) in New Delhi (cited in UNESCO 1999) found that women have specific personal and social reasons for participating in adult literacy classes. Widespread literacy campaigns have socially sanctioned participation and these classes provide opportunities for women to meet and share their experiences, breaking their social isolation (cited in UNESCO 1999).

In the US, the government-funded adult education activity under the *Adult education act*, until 1998. This act incorporated the 1991 *National literacy act* and created indicators of program quality focussing on aspects including curriculum, delivery and staff development. However, the *Workforce investment act*, 1998, replaced the *Adult education act* and 'established a performance accountability system to assess the effectiveness of state and local areas in continuously improving workforce investment activities' (Dryen & Schofield 1999, p.18). This shifted emphasis onto maximising return on investment for national taxpayer dollars in adult education activities. Accountability of training providers now extends to completion rates, employment outcomes and starting wages.

research into **ACE markets**

As implementation of a competitive education and training market intensified during the 1990s, ACE, like other sectors was forced to consider its markets. A market research feasibility study by Socom (1996) suggested ACE's particular marketing advantages were that it was locality-based, learner-centred, flexible, responsive, economical and friendly (p.6). Socom regarded 'the "female centric" culture of ACE, hitherto a successful business advantage', as two-edged. It was seen as a limiting factor to new and potential markets (presumably to men) but a distinct advantage to new markets dominated by women (Socom 1996, p.12). Although researched superficially, the report identified six potential markets for further research: small business and the self-employed, medium-to-large-sized businesses, third age, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities and disadvantaged young people (p.6). *Beyond Cinderella* (Senate 1997, p.40) found evidence (primarily from BACE NSW data) that the ACE market was 'segmented', with women, particularly professionals and clerical workers dominating health programs and male professionals in business and computing skills programs.

While ACE had accepted the need to identify internal market segments and to tap into emerging VET ones beyond its traditional boundaries, there had been a resistance to allow its 'entire operations' to be shaped by the requirements of such a market. Indeed, some research suggests that VET can learn from ACE. Crombie (1997, p.4), for example, in a reaction to ANTA's *Training market of the future* consultation paper cited (ANTA 1997) 'Think local and compete' (Schofield & Dryen 1996), to argue that ACE '... has the potential to bring into the national system practices and values that are essential to the long term effectiveness of the national VET system'.

Crombie (1997, p.6) further suggested that ACE need not blindly accept 'globalisation' as a '... legitimating slogan for the forces of economic rationalism'. Crombie also noted that while 'the national training market' concept is by and large 'psychology-free', ACE was a socio-psychological process. In rejecting the market as the only consideration, Crombie (1997) argued an early case for a consideration of investment in the building of 'social capital' through investment in people, a research theme that is briefly discussed again in this review.

McIntyre, Brown and Ferrier (1996) is the only major research study of the operation of ACE and user-pays system, as further discussed in McIntyre (1998). The final chapter of *The economics of ACE delivery* and its conclusion stress the effects of user-pays on equity. Moore (1997) as well as Schofield (1998) argued the case for Australia to develop a training culture in the context of a future for ACE particularly in the light of training market deregulation.

In summary, research on the economics of ACE (including user-pays arrangements) and research into ACE funding systems is too meagre or in-house to draw firm conclusions. This is a significant ACE research gap.

ACE **outcomes** and **contributions**

Governments are aware that the health of a participative, democratic society is dependent on a well-developed learning culture.

(Campbell & Curtin 1999, p.79)

Come in Cinderella included a chapter specifically about the ACE sector's achievements (Senate 1991, pp.75–87). It noted that: 'Whatever the prescribed purposes of a course may be, learners will measure the success of the course in terms of how it met their own particular goals and purposes'. The same chapter concluded with the observation that: 'We need to redefine "outcomes". Take risks and look for more creative ways to address problems' (p.83). In the 1990s there was certainly a move to broaden the definition of ACE outcomes and to more widely value ACE's contributions to the individual, the community, the economy and governments (Campbell & Curtin 1999, pp.78–9).

In the 1990s ACE research moved away from defining and measuring only participation, or even individual and linear vocational outcomes. Research moved with policy to acknowledge a wider set of important and often unexpected social, economic, community and national outcomes and contributions through ACE. Some of these themes are addressed in this chapter.

research into **ACE outcomes**

Randall (1992) suggested that most ACE research had been undertaken in response to governments' need for information and outcomes for publicly funded ACE programs. Bagnall, cited in *Come in Cinderella* (Senate 1991, pp.82–3), argued that while most education is outcomes-driven, the one-dimensional nature of traditionally used outcomes runs counter to, or ignores other outcomes such as 'initiative, independence, creativity, teamwork, flexibility and responsiveness' (p.83). By the *Beyond Cinderella* report in 1997 there was an emerging commitment to lifelong learning and the valuing of '... the multiplicity of learning opportunities and diversity of provision which characterise a learning society' (p.15). By the end of the decade, previously unmeasured attributes, recently referred to as 'new skills', had been identified as vocationally essential, and further had been identified as being part of ACE's wider intentions and outcomes.

Over the decade to 2000, a number of research projects developed and incorporated more diverse ways of measuring outcomes. ACFEB (1994), for example, used both quantitative and qualitative data from extensive surveys and focus group interviews in ACE to determine and compare intentions, satisfaction and outcomes in Victorian community-based as well as in TAFE and Council of Adult Education (CAE) providers.

Over the decade to 2000, a number of research projects developed and incorporated more diverse ways of measuring outcomes.

A number of small-scale qualitative research projects made advances in tracing the multiplicity of outcomes through ACE, such as Kimberley (1986), Ducie (1994) and Timmers (1997). Indigenous perspectives on community-controlled education (for example, by Boughton & Durnan 1996, 1997) during the decade broadened the notion of outcomes in the wider, education research literature. The recognition of such community outcomes necessary for a learning culture (ATSIPTAC 1999) directly informed two of the Indigenous ACE chapters in Falk, Golding and Balatti (2000) dealing with social capital and wellbeing as outcomes in ACE.

Towards the middle of the decade a number of surveys conducted in ACE in Victoria and New South Wales sought to establish the nature and extent of ACE outcomes. Morgan (1995) undertook an evaluation survey of participants and non-participants in adult, community and further education for the ACFE Board in Victoria, using telephone interviews (N=1229) to survey and profile ACE participants and non-participants. A three-State survey by ABS (1995) of outcomes and pathways in adult and community education, also prepared for the ACFE Board in Victoria, surveyed a stratified sample of ACE participants (N= 2388) and included ten focus group interviews with ACE participants in NSW, Victoria and South Australia. The report comprehensively examined a range of outcomes, including improvement in skills, educational outcomes and employment pathways. It not only considered outcomes and benefits to individuals, but also to society for particular ACE participant groups.

McIntyre (1995b) suggested that by 1995, research into ACE outcomes was impinging on the practice of adult educators and trainers. McIntyre was concerned that the national imperative to 'define' ACE as a national sector, and particularly to define its vocational, social and economic outcomes, had overshadowed Crombie's (1996a) concern about national inequity in ACE. Crombie's particular concern, originally identified by the 1991 Senate inquiry, was that '... if you're an adult Australian your objective opportunities for getting access to good quality learning was very much a function of where you lived' (Crombie 1996a, p.51). Crombie suggested that there were imbalances and disparities in terms of opportunity to access ACE between States and Territories, a situation that had changed little at the end of the decade.

In the ACE sector, consistent with trends in other education and training sectors, there was an increased emphasis over the decade with individually vocationally oriented, customer-satisfaction-type surveys. Sumich and O'Connell (1997), for example, reported results of a customer satisfaction survey of participants in NSW ACE courses. Increasing consideration of vocational outcomes in ACE are discussed separately in the chapter following.

Some conceptual frameworks for ACE explored wider outcomes originally outlined in and anticipated by the major ABS (1995) research. Bradshaw (1999), in *Transforming lives, transforming communities,* outlined a conceptual framework for 'further education', defined as 'general education for adults that gives priority to foundations, preparedness and pathways' (Bradshaw 1999, p.15). Bradshaw stressed a requirement to acknowledge a multiplicity of transformational and connected practices and outcomes associated with ACE learning (for example, literacy, numeracy, linguistic development, learning to learn, capacity for critical intelligence) as well as to acknowledge the importance of recognition and 'pathways'. Bradshaw's report was significant in that, as Hodge (1999) identified in a review of the report, no single identity allegiance was valued in ACE over any other. Hodge noted that Bradshaw framed education in its post-modern, exultant and visionary sense as 'multipurpose, mutidimensional, multifaceted ... multiform; encompassing multiculturalism, multilingualism, multimedia and multiliteracies' (Hodge 1999, p.18).

subsequent learning as an outcome

Outcomes subsequent to ACE, including further education and training within and beyond ACE, became the focus of some ACE commissioned 'pathways' research beyond the middle of the decade (for example, ABS 1995; Sharpe & Robertson 1996; South Coast 1996; Clemans & Rushbrook 1997; LCL 1998b; McIntyre &

Kimberley 1998). However, the simple but persuasive idea of pathways from 'non-vocational' ACE programs to 'vocational' programs in VET becomes more complicated as the interface between ACE and VET becomes blurred, and as the complexity of movement increases.

By the end of the decade social capital was beginning to permeate many social, educational and political discourses, including those in ACE.

For example, it has become difficult to separate vocational courses from personal enrichment courses in both TAFE and ACE. As NCVER (1999, p.4) pointed out in an *Overview of Australian personal enrichment education and training programs 1997*, in a number of States and Territories, the ACE sector 'is sponsored and supported by government and registration procedures [which] have been established for community providers' (NCVER 1999, p.4). In some situations, providers even offer the same 'VET' program as a non-accredited, personal enrichment program. It is therefore also difficult to identify ACE providers on the basis of the programs they provide or in terms of their outcomes. Research into subsequent learning 'pathways' as outcomes from ACE is further discussed in the following chapter in a discussion of research into ACE interfaces.

research into **ACE contributions**

Research into ACE, like that into VET, generally investigates participation and outcomes achieved at an individual level. There is another set of outcomes associated with participation in all fields of education and training, which includes all social and economic outcomes (Campbell & Curtin 1999, pp.78–89). The wider value of ACE and broader consideration of the contributions of ACE are less often researched. This section looks briefly at some recent and emerging research into these wider contributions, including non-program outcomes of ACE, connection to community and improvements to social and economic well-being for families, communities, regions and the nation.

Kenyon et al. (in progress 2000) touched on this gap in research in the proposed methodology for a research project to examine the ACE sector's outcomes and its contribution to the economy. The researchers anticipated taking account of the consumption benefit of ACE, by asking:

> *In the absence of [the] ACE sector, what would an alternative use of the resource bound up in the operations of the sector have to produce by way of*

> *economic benefits to exceed the ACE sector's contribution to the nation? That is, the task is to estimate the opportunity cost of the ACE sector.*
>
> (Kenyon in progress 2000, p.10)

The social, economic and community contribution of ACE received increased attention towards the end of the decade. The costs and benefits of ACE had come to the forefront in education generally, and ACE research in particular, with a shift to increased public accountability in the 1990s. While the benefits, in terms of outcomes and contributions of adult education, were widely acknowledged, the national government and many State and Territory governments had deliberately avoided funding adult education in the community sector. The main exceptions were areas of ACE that governments perceived might deliver learning better or more cheaply than publicly funded alternatives—in particular vocational learning.

However, it proved difficult to quantify and separate diverse outcomes as either economic, social, vocational or non-vocational by means of research, particularly those obvious but less tangible outcomes for families and communities. There has nevertheless been increased recognition of the importance of providing evidence of such contributions. As OECD (1996) stressed, the lack of evidence of the value to an economy is of great concern, since it is '... precisely the kind of learning that could prove so crucial in ensuring that citizens are well-informed and active participants in cultural life'.

social contributions

It is widely acknowledged that Eva Cox first gave prominence in Australia to the concept of social capital through the 1995 Boyer lectures (Crombie 1998a, p.5). By 1998 a major national political party had recognised that:

> *... no education opportunity more thoroughly reflects the true value of lifelong learning than ACE. It reflects each of the social benefits of learning—self knowledge, good citizenship and the development of social capital.*
>
> (Australian Labor Party 1998)

By the end of the decade social capital was beginning to permeate many social, educational and political discourses, including those in ACE (Falk, Golding & Balatti 2000).

Schofield (in Macrae & Hazel 1998) had argued that in a milieu of rapid social change there was a:

> *... need to conceptualise research which explores the relationship between the social need for active citizenship ... and this capacity of adult education to*

> *provide a place where skills for active citizenship can be developed, to build the capacity of societies and communities to drive the economy rather than the reverse.* (Schofield in Macrae & Hazel 1998, p.11)

Schofield concluded that '... our social fabric ... has got holes in it ... and adult education can, with the help of some creative and rigorous research, help mend some of them' (p.11).

Similar themes had been aired in the ACFE's *Community in ACE* issues paper (ACFEB 1997a), which very deliberately adopted a strategy of ACE as 'adult education in the community' in the early 1990s (p.1). It noted a growing awareness 'that a dysfunctional society can negate any amount of personal well being' (p.4). It also flagged that citizens were beginning to identify ways they can 'pitch in and serve their communities by putting something back for what they receive' (p.4).

The ACFEB (1997a) paper was acknowledging Putnam's (1993) notion of reciprocity and its part in social capital building. It went on to cite (but not formally reference) Putnam's contention 'that strong communities with high levels of social capital lead to strong economies' (ACFEB 1997a, p.5), and argued that strong economies and strong communities might be self-reinforcing. Some of these ideas were beginning to flow through at that time from Onyx and Bullen's (1997) comparative and empirical study of social capital in five NSW communities. Research on regional, community learning underpinned by social capital theory was then emerging from the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia in Launceston (for example, Falk 1998). Social capital was becoming recognised '... essentially as an attribute of networks of people in families, neighbourhoods, communities and other social arenas' (Onyx & Bullen in Winter 2000).

The ACFEB (1997a) issues paper took up some of these ideas in ACE. It suggested that:

> *Community owned and managed ACE providers are uniquely situated, perhaps even privileged, because they unite two key priorities of modern Western governments: education and community. This blend is what sets ACE apart.* (ACFEB 1997a, p.5)

Further, the ACFEB paper argued the explicit case for community-owned and managed adult education, suggesting '... there has never been a better time to defend and extend ACE by doing so' (p.6). The paper finally proposed commissioned research '... which would give impetus to our own search for measures of the added value of community owned and managed education' (ACFEB 1997a, p.6). The Falk, Balatti and Golding (2000) study of social capital and wellbeing in ACE was one of the first research products generated by this strategic research imperative.

ACE **quality measures**

Come in Cinderella (Senate 1991, p.155) postulated an important nexus between scholarship, research, good practice and the training of adult educators. It encouraged good practice being informed by research, on the basis that '... benefits would accrue to both local practice and the overall status and clout of the sector' (Senate 1991, p.156).

Best practice research in education generally, and in VET in ACE in particular, became urgently necessary with ANTA's requirement that:

> *... by the end of 1996 providers and agencies receiving funds for vocational education and training will have in place quality assurance arrangements determined by the State or Territory.* (cited in Thomas 1996, p.106)

Quality-related research became prevalent towards the middle of the decade, particularly in New South Wales (Thomas 1996; DTEC 1997). Bishop et al. (1995) identified some common features of 'healthy adult education programs and organisations' in NSW ACE, on the basis that '... we needed more than anecdotal evidence ... We had to identify the factors which are the hallmarks of good practice' (Bishop in BACE 1996a, p.79).

ABS (1995, pp.100–1) acknowledged quality as a key objective in national ACE policy and measured it using empirical research (in Victoria, NSW and SA) to assess student satisfaction. ABS (1995) concluded that ACE was indeed providing a quality service. In particular, it noted: a high proportion of respondents moved on to further ACE courses; most participants found the courses very helpful; ACE was catering particularly well for disadvantaged groups and participants' expectations were generally being met.

Traynor (1996) suggested that development of quality standards for ACE was a step towards ACE organisations becoming self-regulatory. Specifically, Traynor argued against outside imposition of quality, on the basis that if one takes:

> *... away independence ... you take the C away from ACE. Without independence, we are no longer community based organisations but instruments of government policy.* (Traynor 1996, p.82)

Traynor argued against inappropriate benchmarking of ACE in NSW to ANTA service standards, opting instead for the establishment of an independent body to distinguish and validate ACE educational and organisational practice. Bennett (1998) examined the business practices of community-based ACE providers in Victoria to benchmark best practice in management techniques and planning and evaluation processes. Dryen and Schofield (1999) recently proposed the application of VET performance indicators to ACE, a proposal now under consideration by relevant bodies.

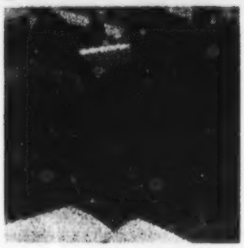
research into **equity** and **disadvantage in ACE**

As in other post-compulsory education and training sectors in Australia, the discourses and research into equity and disadvantage in ACE tended to be sidelined late in the decade (Butler & Ferrier 1999) by more market-driven perspectives. ACE, however, continued to claim that it provides 'a second chance education to those who are educationally disadvantaged' (Robinson & Davis 1997, p.3). This perception was seen as under challenge by what Robinson and Davis regarded as a big 'breakthrough' as a consequence of McIntyre and Crombie (1995) and ABS (1995) research on participation in ACE suggesting that the more educationally *advantaged* also tend to be found in ACE. Robinson and Davis (1997, p.3) went as far as to suggest that in reality 'ACE participation is swamped by people who are more educationally and economically advantaged'. McIntyre (1997, p.5) reasoned that 'equity in participation in VET is not being achieved ... because equity is not something that ACE has been properly funded to do'. McIntyre argued that although ANTA had highlighted 'ACE as a paragon of cost-effective and "market driven" provision', research showed that 'equity is the first casualty of user pays of "user pays' in ACE' (p.5).

As in other post-compulsory education and training sectors in Australia, the discourses and research into equity and disadvantage in ACE tended to be sidelined late in the decade by more market-driven perspectives.

The significance of the NSW research 'breakthrough' that the more educationally disadvantaged also tend to be found in ACE referred to above, has since been widely debated. Other research in education and training establishes a clear link between previous education and a desire to continue to learn. Factors *other than* level of schooling may also influence people to do ACE courses, such as being unemployed or being out of the labour force. In addition, there is over-reporting by more literate respondents in survey-based participation measures, particularly those learning in more formal, higher-level programs.

Some research suggests that it is the commitment to equity and the qualitative nature of participant experience and involvement in ACE rather than equity as reflected in relative participation figures which is important about ACE. Brown (1999, p.25), in a discussion about ACE for a just society, cited Michael Raper saying that the Australian Council of Social Services and adult education should have much in common, and specifically that '... education leads to a passion for social justice when it lifts the blinkers of ignorance and fear. It leads to a commitment to a fair and trustworthy society'. This theme recurs in parallel international adult education research reviewed earlier in this review.



opportunities and challenges in ACE

> *There is a struggle going on in adult education between two opposing tendencies. The dominant tendency in adult education policy making and administration is economistic, bureaucratic and directive ... There has been little effective opposition ... Yet there is deep unease in the field about the speed with which an economic rationalist view of ACE's mission has become dominant, and the way in which this mind-set marginalises the traditional social justice focus of the field.* (Foley 1996, pp.1–2)

The big change factors for ACE, as Macrae (1999, p.6) argued,

> *... are the same as the ones changing us in our daily lives: lifelong learning, the knowledge based economy, technology, globalisation, our experience of community, redefinition of work, the ageing of western societies and reconfiguration of personal lives.*

As the decade progressed, the defensive stance to national training reform shifted to a 'speaking back' orientation, particularly in States, sectors and networks which were well advanced in their thinking and researching about ACE. In effect, research was used more strategically *by* ACE rather than *on* ACE. That research has been used to position the 'sector' in relation to training reform in the first instance, but more recently in relation to the value of adult education and lifelong learning more generally, to embrace new and emerging groups, to refocus on the community in ACE (see Campbell & Curtin 1999, pp.53–63), most recently in relation to ACE's contribution to social capital. These trends were not, however evenly or widely disseminated across ACE nationally.

Our general observation is that research has tended to concentrate on measuring and valuing in the light of a number of themes which can be most accurately described as emerging opportunities and challenges. For the purposes of this research review, for the rest of this chapter we identify the six dominant (but necessarily overlapping and by no means exhaustive) research themes that have provided both opportunities and challenges to both ACE research and public policy in the 1990s. These six themes have been identified directly from the available research literature, and are in addition to the two major themes identified earlier in the consolidation; that is, ACE participation and ACE contributions and outcomes. Indeed, both sets of themes tend to intersect.

research about **vocationalism in ACE**

Introduction of the training reform agenda in Australia in the early 1990s and its underpinning of vocational competencies resulted in increased incentives for ACE to become part of that agenda. The effect of this agenda on ACE, as well as ACE's active response, was a common research theme during the decade.

Much has been written and researched about the tensions and possibilities associated with this trend to vocationalism in ACE. Although some of the debate is recent, its origins are historic. ACE history in Victoria, for example, goes back to a splintering of mechanics institutes last century as summarised by Rushbrook and Clemans (1999, pp.104–5). In 1974 the vocational and ACE sectors in Australia came closer with Kangan's (1974) vision for TAFE, which included further education. Both TAFE and ACE, as Rushbrook and Clemans argued, 'agreed to live and work together' (p.105), but were faced in the 1990s with 'dangerous opportunities': a top-down management and curriculum, a push for more work-related credentials and demographic research confirming that need (p.105). This well-documented debate about 'how (but not whether) to embrace the realities of the VET agenda)' (Rushbrook & Clemans 1999, p.105) has been replicated in different forms in all States and Territories as well as nationally.

As the decade progressed, the defensive stance to national training reform shifted to a 'speaking back' orientation, particularly in States, sectors and networks which were well advanced in their thinking and researching about ACE.

Systematically mapping and improving vocational competency standards, and particularly regarding competencies as one of the important ACE outcomes, was a new issue for many ACE providers. Whyte (1994), for example, mapped the field and identified some of the competency issues in ACE for the peak national body (AAACE) with Department of Employment, Education and Training funding.

There is evidence in the research literature of ACE providers adapting to the competitive vocationalisation of ACE, in particular embracing accreditation, quality standards and customer focus common to industry and to the VET sector. Williams (n.d.) wrote about WEA Illawarra's accreditation of its core business in 1994 as the organisation became 'sensitive to the trends in vocational training' (p.33). Traynor (1996) argued for the ACE sector to set up its own quality endorsement and standards body '... to put a fence around the field' and call it ACE (p.86), rather than becoming incorporated into outside, more accountable organisations. Bishop (1997) cited Sam Thomas of BACE, after the introduction of the first-ever customer satisfaction survey of ACE in NSW in 1996, as saying that 'The board will now have solid data to measure the ACE sector's performance in VET', as well as '... providing a better service to all its customers' (Bishop 1997, p.24).

There is evidence in the research literature of ACE providers adapting to the competitive vocationalisation of ACE, in particular embracing accreditation, quality standards and customer focus common to industry and to the VET sector.

Issues related to funding, recognition, accreditation and independence of ACE are found in the first and most comprehensive studies of vocationalism in ACE undertaken in NSW: particularly *The vocational scope of ACE* (McIntyre, Morris & Tennant 1993) and ACE Works (McIntyre, Foley, Morris & Tennant 1995). The concern about vocationalism of ACE was policy-driven, particularly with the formation of ANTA.

The principal reason for the emergence of VET as a research issue for ACE in the 1990s was identified by McIntyre, Foley, Morris and Tennant (1995, p.25). It was that vocational education came to be seen as an instrument of government and economic policy, and that the capacity to remain competitive came to be seen as dependent on the knowledge and skills for the workforce. The ability and potential of the 'Cinderella' sector to cost-effectively expand VET activity was clear to governments. What was less clear, as McIntyre, Morris and Tennant (1993) observed, was the ability of ACE 'to realise the potential in this vocational role', as well as how 'the development costs (including matters of accreditation and curriculum development)' (p.91) were to be properly resourced.

ANTA supported a strong presence in ACE in the national VET system and identified defining features which enshrined the value of ACE's contribution. They included the 'clear set of principles' in MCEETYA's 1993 national ACE policy, and ACE's defining characteristic ('lifelong education, flexibility, being consumer driven and client responsive, multiple entry and exit points, being non-compulsory and emphasising compensatory or second-chance roles' [Moran 1994, p.3]). Moran saw these as 'contemporary characteristics to which TAFE should aspire' and accurately predicted that, 'Both ACE and TAFE will face an environment where there is greater competition, or as economists like to call it, a national training market'.

By the middle of the decade there were serious concerns from the AAACE Research Network that social and political attention to economic imperatives were seeing the vocationalising of ACE (Bagnall 1996), and that:

> *Current government policies are constraining funded research in ACE to focus on the vocational, to interpret ACE as vocational and thereby diminish and marginalise the many and the arguably more important values of ACE.*
> (Bagnall 1996, p.114)

Indeed, AAACE recommended in 1996 to the 1997 Senate committee through Bagnall (1996, p.114) for 'a more socially balanced distribution of research support and activity across the diversity and impacts and programs in the sector'.

The tensions created in ACE by the funding advantages associated with vocational programs were clearly identified in *Beyond Cinderella*. There were perceptions that one part of the core business of ACE remained undervalued and underfunded by the Commonwealth, while the small proportion of funded vocational programs took the lion's share of the administrative resources and workers' time. Even in States (such as Queensland) where extra effort had been expended to encourage VET provision in ACE, the development costs and effort outlined above have meant that the only biggest ACE providers with registered training organisation (RTO) status can realistically bid for VET program provision.

The *Beyond Cinderella* report (Senate 1997, p.3) deliberately challenged the conceptual inadequacy of differentiating, in policy and funding mechanisms, between educational programs on the ground of their perceived or declared vocational orientation. It noted that such a divide:

> *... muddies thinking, distorts values, and perpetrates a whole lot of unhelpful divisions - between private gain and social benefit; between the market and domestic spheres; between men's work and women's work, between short term interests and long term gains.* (Senate 1997, p.3)

While there were indications from the middle of the decade of adjustments to this argument to account for 'new skills' and to widen conceptions of work and leaning (for example, Crombie 1995, p.2), expenditure on the 'vocational' remained privileged over the 'non-vocational' on the assumption that the former had more direct links with employability and competitive advantage, as outlined in *Beyond Cinderella* (Senate 1997, p.5). Some sections of ACE used research to actively embrace and adapt to vocationalism. Thomas (1994) revealed that the purposes of the NSW BACE research, later published as *ACE Works* by McIntyre, Foley, Morris and Tennant (1995), was 'to serve the Board's need for high quality empirical data in a form which can be taken up in national and State planning for vocational education and training' (Thomas 1994, p.60).

Other sections of ACE used research to critique the new vocationalism. Crombie (1995) suggested that the move by ACE to embrace the market was not new. Crombie agued that ACE had, through its concern about local communities and fee-paying nature, always been market-aware. His particular concern (Crombie 1995, p.2) was that ACE's other learning domains and priorities were being neglected by ANTA, that the VET strategy suffered from 'cultural lag', and that it was based on an outdated, narrow concept of work and the type of learning that improves workforces and organisations. Research into women's different perspectives on work and evidence of discrimination in the provision of training and access to employment (NOWinFE n.d.) have also affected women's response as to whether and how ACE might embrace vocationalism in the mould of the training reform agenda.

Others used research to criticise ACE for standing apart from VET on other grounds. Anderson (1999) comprehensively criticised the 1997 Senate report for its inadequate understanding of the nature and significance of ACE in TAFE from both historical and contemporary perspectives and argued for their reintegration. Research into ACE VET linkages remained a live issue at the end of the decade (Saunders 2001).

By the end of the decade there was evidence of increasing involvement by ACE providers in VET provision (Campbell & Curtin 1999, p.54). While it is difficult from the evidence to be sure of such a 'trend' in terms of student numbers without longitudinal research, there was ample research evidence by the end of the decade that much of what ACE does has direct or vocational outcomes, and that there is an increasing array of vocational courses in ACE. NSW research led the field (for example, McIntyre, Foley, Morris & Tennant 1995; Kaye Schofield and Associates 1996b). Volkoff, Golding and Jenkin (1999) recently confirmed that some programs offered in community-owned and managed contexts in non-ACE states (Queensland and Western Australia) also have vocational outcomes not dissimilar to those from an ACE sector State (Victoria), and comparable to vocational outcomes from TAFE programs in all three States.

research into **ACE interfaces**

Lifelong learning, and in particular the key competency of learning for life, is self-generating by definition. Participation in adult education has been shown to increase a person's chances of lifelong learning—of returning to formal education and obtaining a higher qualification, undertaking formal academic study and subsequently undertaking a formal vocational course (Evans 1988). These moves from ACE to other education (and vice versa), often across 'interfaces' to other education and training sectors have been described in the research literature as 'pathways'. The development and focus on pathways other than work *as an end in themselves* in the early 1990s, and embodied in MCEETYA's national ACE policy (1993, p.17), needs to be interpreted in the light of the difficult alternatives in paid work and the frequency of enforced transitions between education interfaces at the height of the recession in the early 1990s.

Participation in adult education has been shown to increase a person's chances of lifelong learning—of returning to formal education and obtaining a higher qualification, undertaking formal academic study and subsequently undertaking a formal vocational course.

Bennink and Blackwell (1995) saw ACE 'as a continuum of learning, which offers choices of learning outcomes at various stages of an individual's learning development' (p.3), and recommended that ACE be recognised 'as a pathway in the promotional material of formal educational institutions'. ABS (1995) deliberately included and researched both educational and vocational pathways as ACE outcomes. ABS used data to suggest an association between undertaking an ACE course and an educational pathway, particularly for people 'from disadvantaged social groupings; that is young people and unemployed people' (ABS 1995, p.60).

Sharpe and Robertson (1996) researched a major issues paper on ACE pathways to VET. They acknowledged the 'strong debate about the relevance or otherwise of the ACE sector to what is now termed the "VET effort" '(p.7). While acknowledging the ACE–VET interface, both formal and informal, as '... inevitably and appropriately only a small part of the ACE story' (Sharpe & Robertson 1996, p.8), they concluded that:

> *Pathways between ACE and VET do exist at institutional, provider and individual participant level. Areas of more research are indicated, though existence of pathways will always to some extent be qualitative.*
> (Sharpe & Robertson 1996, p.4)

Schofield and Dryen (1996, p.3) produced a schematic diagram that depicted 'the national policy environment on ACE, VET and the ACE–VET interface' (pp.2–3). They also specifically considered the importance of improved cross-sectoral links if ACE was to properly interface with the VET system (pp.A4.14–A4.16). Angwin (1997) analysed the shifting boundaries of adult and vocational education, in part as an early outcome of the *Paths to pathways* research (Angwin et al. 1998) into the bewildering pathways followed by young people who have not experienced success at school (Angwin et al. 1998, p.13). As outlined earlier, many young people later follow such pathway into ACE.

Clemans and Rushbrook (1997) used case studies in five Victorian ACE providers to tease out the notion of 'pathways' in ACE. They particularly explored the:

> *... opportunities for adult learners to move between pre-vocational and vocational programs, expanding and increasing the learning outcomes that flow from participation in ACE provision.* (Clemans & Rushbrook 1997, p.6)

They explored why those pathways are forged as well the diverse effects and some success factors. Their research was significant in that it identified that pathways *within* ACE seemed to be more favoured than those beyond it (for example to TAFE), challenging the notion of ACE as a one-way stepping stone to TAFE. The research showed that pathways were neither linear nor hierarchical but were driven by current learning need, growing learning confidence and identity issues. McIntyre and Kimberley (1998) looked comprehensively at issues including good practice, models and guiding principles for planning pathways for women from ACE to VET.

research into ACE **accreditation** and **recognition**

ACE courses generally, both award and non-award courses alike, have been shown to contribute to the development of the Mayer key competencies (Mayer 1992). Indeed, the vocational contribution of ACE in both VET accredited and non-accredited courses is well-documented in several States (McIntyre 1993; Schofield & Dryen 1996; Volkoff, Golding & Jenkin 1999).

In the past decade, however, the movement toward accredited course provision within ACE has been one of the most striking developments in most States, and reflects the increasing importance of credentialled vocational education and training within the ACE sector (Adams 1996). Victoria began accredited provision of courses in the ACE sector in 1990, New South Wales in 1994 (Thomas & Moore 1995; NSW TAFE 1995), Tasmania in 1994. The ACT developed a draft policy endorsing provision of accredited learning in ACE in 1996.

To date, despite the attention it has received in recent years, accredited provision does not represent a large proportion of ACE activity overall.

In documenting the extent of accreditation in ACE, Adams (1996) noted that differences in ACE across States and Territories meant that accredited learning had developed within the sector in different ways in different locations. In some States where TAFE served as the provider of ACE courses, for example, accreditation in ACE had not emerged as an issue. Adams (1996) noted that accredited course provision was well-established in NSW and Victoria, that fewer courses had been provided in Tasmania and South Australia and that Queensland, ACT and Northern Territory lacked formal infrastructures for accredited ACE course provision at that stage. As such, comparative information had been difficult to obtain at a national level because of varying structures of the ACE sector in different States and Territories.

To date, despite the attention it has received in recent years, accredited provision does not represent a large proportion of ACE activity overall. In Victoria in 1998, for example, only a small minority (about 1 in 10) of ACE students were enrolled in accredited courses (Teese & Davies 1999). But these statistics obscure the nature, scope and magnitude of ACE provision. Accredited courses involve significantly more contact hours and represent a stronger resource commitment on the part of the provider. While they tend not to be offered by smaller community providers, they also constitute a significant aspect of the provision in larger ACE providers, some of which are capable of competing with TAFE institutes in certain award areas. This polarisation of activity—between accredited and non-accredited provision, framed largely by size of provider—has important implications for the future development of ACE as a sector.

At a very straightforward level, accreditation renders formal the already acknowledged contributions of ACE to vocational learning, contributions that have been recognised as among the key outcomes of the sector's provision. For example, McIntyre Morris and Tennant (1993) found a clear consensus among NSW ACE providers that:

> *ACE makes its greatest contribution to VET by providing accessible and inexpensive learning opportunities, by having the flexibility to respond to immediate local needs and by being open-ended so learners are able to define the purposes of learning.* (McIntyre, Morris & Tennant 1993, p.vii)

But the process of accreditation has specific implications and effects for the sector. Inevitably, the demands of accreditation, which entail among other things, standardisation of provision and recognition, the instigation of formalised pathways, changed professional demands on teaching and administrative staff, stronger focus on defined outcomes and increased accountability and reporting requirements, have necessarily had the effect of 'mainstreaming' of ACE.

Research suggests that many Australian ACE providers have welcomed accredited provision as a new and valuable string to their bows, largely because they are confident that they can bring ACE values into the equation to offer enhanced models of learning for their students. It is their specific philosophy of responsiveness and learner-centredness which has made providers confident of taking up accredited provision, secure in the knowledge that this is what clients want and that they will be able to deliver in an appropriate fashion (Volkoff, Golding & Jenkin 1999). In these ways hallmark qualities of ACE can be seen in accredited and non-accredited offerings—ACE students surveyed in Victoria in 1998 reported high levels of satisfaction with their learning experiences, regardless of the accredited status of their courses (Teese & Davies 1999).

In these circumstances, accredited learning and associated pathways could be accessible to a range of learners whose education and training needs are intense but who are under-represented in other educational sectors, including the so-called 'equity target groups' in ACE. Quite apart from these equity groups, accredited courses in ACE also provide convenient and accessible educational opportunities for individuals in non-accredited ACE courses, past ACE students, people in workforce re-entry courses and from small business, as well as existing employees who are training (Barnett & Wilson 1994).

A sample survey of the views of Victorian providers regarding accreditation in 1998 indicated that providers in Victoria viewed the provision of accredited courses within ACE (and within their own centres) very favourably, providing that their overall diversity of provision could be retained (Teese & Davies 1999).

This perspective addresses some of the different functions of accreditation within ACE. Accredited learning within ACE benefits more than the second-chance learners, important as those may be (Thomas & Moore 1995). It also allows ACE to play a strong role in upgrading workplace knowledge and skills of the local workforce, with local businesses, especially small business, encouraging or sponsoring employees in ACE courses geared toward specific skills development (Thomas & Moore 1995).

Rushbrook (1996) presented a case for improved accreditation to encourage funds, articulation and pathways, the title of the paper, Riding the tiger suggesting that it involved both opportunity and danger for ACE. Crothers (1996) researched a practical guide to RPL (recognition of prior learning) in ACE for ANTA. Crothers included useful references which had informed RPL in ACE, but recognised RPL as 'an integral part of CBT' (competency-based training) and closely related to the national training reform agenda (Crothers 1996, p.26.)

> The gendered nature of ACE practice and work is a consistent research theme. There is a perception, however, that ACE workers also lack status and organisation.

Towards the end of the decade accreditation had been robustly taken up beyond VET in some States. Further, gaps in educational provision had resulted in the research and development of broader ACE-based educational products. In Victoria, the curriculum powers of the ACFE Board had been used to initiate research (for example, ACFEB 1997c) to develop and customise a wider range of accredited courses, for example, the Certificate in General Adult Education (CGEA) and the Diploma of Further Education.

research into the **workforce** in ACE

The ACE workforce in Australia lacks central control or administration even on a State level, although States and Territories with better developed sectors have networks for support and professional development. Although the paid component of this workforce is growing, much of the work done in ACE providers, especially smaller centres, is voluntary and unpaid, and can include both administration and tutoring roles. Indeed the line between 'staff' and 'students' can be deliberately blurred. All of this makes research into the nature of the ACE workforce more difficult.

It is known from the limited research available (for example, Townsend & Clemans 1995) that ACE workers tend to be women, be older and have a low qualifications base, although there are many also young and very qualified workers. The gendered nature of ACE practice and work is a consistent research theme. There is a perception, however, that ACE workers also lack status and organisation. There is low worker turnover but a perception of a decrease in the readiness of people to volunteer, consistent with well-documented national trends in volunteering generally. One research project in Victoria conducted case-study research contrasting technical/managerial and participative professional management styles in ACE in Victoria. Research inclusive of staff roles in Victorian ACE has shown staff to be highly significant in terms of participant and community well-being (Falk, Golding & Balatti 2000).

McIntyre, Volkoff and Perry (in progress, 2000) were undertaking a comprehensive census of the workforce in ACE in Victoria. In recognition of the important role that sessional staff play in the ACE sector, this study was attempting to capture a snapshot of the entire workforce in ACE across all funded providers. In addition, data gathered through surveys and interviews were being used to analyse professional development practice and outcomes as well as projected sectoral needs. ACFEB (1999e) had a comprehensive strategic plan for professional development linked to a three-year ACFEB plan, 2001–2003.

As with the wider society, ACE has sought to make the most of new, emergent and converging technologies in the 1990s, and has deliberately focussed some research on its impacts and future potential.

There are a number of examples of recent attempts through research to address staff issues in ACE. GATE (2000), for example, has recently undertaken research into employee development programs. Forwood and McClean (in progress 2000) were undertaking a scoping study of the human resource development situation in TAFE Victoria, which will include information and perspectives on ACE providers. Other recent research in rural New South Wales also serves as a scoping study of the ACE workforce in regions covered.

research into **new technologies** in ACE

As with the wider society, ACE has sought to make the most of new, emergent and converging technologies in the 1990s, and has deliberately focussed some research on its impacts and future potential.

Coventry and Higginson (1996) comprehensively researched emerging issues, barriers and good practice associated with open learning in ACE. They identified existing and potential client groups that would use convergent technologies in ACE. They also identified opportunities for open learning in ACE, '... provided it is adequately resourced, and that the learner's needs for support, information, recognition and choice are respected' (Coventry & Higginson 1996, p.42). Clementson, Douglas and Kelly (1996) included a review of the emerging literature in 1996. ACFEB (1997e) took the research findings and created a comprehensive planning guide for the use of new convergent technologies in ACE.

Beyond Cinderella (Senate 1997) devoted a relatively large section of their report to the emerging impact of technology for ACE. They particularly flagged the need and opportunities for community-based providers to reach the emerging 'information poor' in and through ACE. By the end of the decade, the internet generally, and web-based information-seeking in particular, had become widespread, although by no means universal in a wide variety of adult education settings. However Pobega and Russell (1999), in a review of online technology in the ACE classroom noted that, 'As a learning tool, the Internet is still in its infancy', and that, 'Much of the research into online resources has been conducted in well-equipped environments—far from the circumstances in which many adult educators find themselves' (Pobega & Russell 1999, p.57).

By the end of the decade BACE had completed research assessing the feasibility of developing on-line delivery for VET in ACE in NSW (Hoskins 1999). ACFEB (1999d) also had a comprehensive strategic plan for implementing new learning technologies in ACE, including evaluation of pilot programs.

research into **lifelong learning** in ACE

ACE research has frequently intersected with the lifelong learning debate. While the concept of lifelong learning goes back earlier, it was the *Learning to be* report (Faure 1972) which gave the term its modern currency. The most comprehensive recent summary of that intersection between ACE and lifelong learning research is found within Campbell and Curtin (1999, pp.37–52).

The lifelong learning concept has been used positively in ACE research throughout the decade, to make the sector count, to validate ACE's more general (than vocational) educational focus and to engage with emerging contributions about the 'knowledge society' and 'the knowledge worker'. It has also been used to broaden the idea of 'one-off learning in one course', to learning in a myriad of ways over a lifetime.

Recognition of lifelong learning in ACE research in Australia predates the decade. While lifelong learning quietly became a national ACE policy goal in 1993

(MCEETYA 1993, p.15), the concept was revived and more widely disseminated internationally as a consequence of Delors (1996). As with any concept or agenda, lifelong learning has been interpreted widely in research. ACE in particular has been seen in some research as a primary site for lifelong learning—pre-programmed for delivering its policy promise to develop adults able to achieve their needs and aspirations to the full (MCEETYA 1993, p.15).

... ACE is ideally placed to play a pivotal role in Australia's lifelong learning, through its combined qualities of diversity, accessibility and responsiveness to local needs.

Most Australian lifelong learning research since 1996 has specifically focussed on ways to meet specific and rapidly changing needs of working individuals and enterprises, although some ACE research has taken a wider view. Alt and Beatty (1996) highlighted the importance of lifelong learning in ACE and suggested that 'ACE through its flexibility and community management has the potential to assist ... people to enjoy the benefit from lifelong learning' (Alt & Beatty 1996, p.14).

Lifelong learning provides a particular challenge for institutional forms of education, since, as Macrae (1999) pointed out in Victoria, it:

> *... is done by individuals. Lifelong learners have learnt how to learn. They are self determining learners. They choose for themselves. They themselves - not industry, not governments - will pre-eminently drive their education from now on.* (Macrae 1999, p.7)

Campbell and Curtin (1999) argued that ACE is ideally placed to play a pivotal role in Australia's lifelong learning, through its combined qualities of diversity, accessibility and responsiveness to local needs. In those senses, ACE has been seen as having the ability to meet the very diverse lifelong learning needs of a broad range of adults. Within the one community, for example, lifelong learning, including basic education, life skills, vocational preparation or enhancement, training and professional development could be met by a local ACE provider. Campbell and Curtin (1999) highlighted the specific educational features understood to be characteristics of ACE: learner-centred styles of teaching and learning; optimum access to courses; supportive educational contexts; and the maximisation of pathways. All these attributes figure strongly in wider lifelong learning typologies.

Wider discussions about the place of lifelong learning in ACE have focussed more intensely on the expectations and purposes of lifelong learning. European research into lifelong learning has been particularly influential (FEFC 1997). Some researchers in the United Kingdom regard lifelong learning as a planned and continuous sequence of learning (Smith & Spurling 1999). In an influential international work on lifelong learning, Delors (1996) proposed that different stages of schooling and education need to be viewed as supplementary and complementary.

In developing a picture of the discourses of adult education and lifelong learning, Bagnall (2000), writing in an international context, argued that the policy impetus for lifelong learning is predominantly economically determined. Bagnall regards this notion as generally regressive, arguing that in creating education as a private good for which individuals should pay, it focusses on individual interest and vocational skills development. Increasingly, in fact, lifelong learning has come to mean the development of basic life skills and vocational skills in the interests of engagement in a service to the global economy.

Moves to create seamless articulation and recognition across sectors, the development and extension of accreditation structures and the recognition of non-educational settings as appropriate bases for development of credentialled competencies are widely seen as pivotal to successful lifelong learning frameworks. However, as many have observed, the focus dwells increasingly on the individual as amassed educational capital.

Some researchers have identified dangers in this approach, including a narrow view of what constitutes lifelong learning, where responsibilities for education and training lie, where benefits are located and what qualities might be sought in learners

> *... there is ample evidence to convince us that trade training—both content and method—is generally over-emphasised at the expense of a broader context of lifelong learning ...* (Kintzer 1999, p.149)

This commodifying of education does mean that the project of lifelong learning becomes increasingly an individual responsibility, rather than one of the state. Because lifelong learning is in the individual's own best interest it is up to citizens to market themselves as effectively as they can (Bagnall 2000, p.22; Kintzer 1999; Jansen & van der Veen 1997).

What does this mean for ACE? Certainly some of the language surrounding lifelong learning in ACE locates its rationale and impetus with the imperative to equip individuals most effectively for the world of work. Lifelong learning means that '... the domains of basic education, vocational education, higher education and work experience need to intersect to achieve the identikit of the ideal employee in the 90s...' (ACFEB 1998). It must be remembered, however, that the lifelong learning model extends beyond the preparation of a more adept and flexible worker to the model of a corps of 'accomplished citizens'.

ACE has been identified as a key starting point (or more accurately second-chance starting point) for the aspirations of educationally disadvantaged adults, in particular early school leavers, Indigenous peoples, adult migrants, ex-prisoners and sole parents seeking re-entry to the workforce. It is widely acknowledged as '... the bridge for people who would otherwise not re-enter the education system' (Thomas & Moore 1995). ACE practice is argued to provide the turnaround foundation experience necessary for lifelong learning: rebuilding students' confidence in themselves as people and as learners (ACFEB 1998, p.3). ACFEB's (1998) mission in Victoria, for example, was closely tied to the lifelong learning concept, to ensure:

> *... the provision of adult, community and further education to give Victorian adults the opportunity to participate in lifelong learning which contributes to their social, economic and cultural development as individuals and as members of the community.* (ACFEB 1998, p.2)

Candy (1999) suggested that there was '... little doubt that Australia lags behind many comparable countries in terms of its attention to lifelong learning' (p.3). Candy also identified a concern at a national level '... that broadening access will have undesirable economic consequences' and that Australia's taxation system 'penalises employers and employees, especially when the learning undertaken is not of a specifically vocational type' (Candy 1999, p.5).

The Australian Association of Adult and Community Education's (1999) relaunch as Adult Learning Australia in 1998 aimed to put the ACE sector '... at the forefront of the worldwide shift of emphasis to learners and the learning process' (Crombie 1998b, p.3). Crombie noted that adult learning was entering the vernacular and that '... learning is cropping up everywhere: "open learning", "learning organisations", "learning cities", "lifelong learning". Learning is good currency' (Crombie 1998b, p.2).

Watson (1999) comprehensively reviewed prospects for lifelong learning in Australia, but acknowledged that the community perspective in ACE, outlined in figure 1, while most compatible with the concept of an inclusive education, contradicted 'the management and market approach to service delivery' (Watson 1999, p.18). Watson concluded that ACE:

> *... is provided largely on a user pays-basis, but market mechanisms are not adequate to targeting individuals most in need. It is important for governments*

> *to find a way to accommodate a community policy perspective within the managerial and market processes that currently dominate the delivery of education and training in Australia.* (Watson 1999, p.1)

Campbell and Curtin's (1999) chapter on lifelong learning and ACE, concluded that 'the conditions for creating a learning culture have never been more propitious', and that:

> *… the ACE sector, with its historic commitment to learner centredness and its proven ability to be responsive, is in a prime position to provide the leadership to play an important role in partnership with other sectors in transforming Australia into a learning society.* (Campbell & Curtin 1999, p.52)

121

findings and **directions** for further research

> *We need to conceptualise research which explores the relationship between the social need for active citizenship ... to build the capacity of society and communities to drive the economy forward rather then the reverse and where conflicting views about the future can be reconciled.*
>
> (Schofield in Macrae & Hazel 1998, p.11)

suggestions during the decade

This research consolidation, by sifting through the most publicly available ACE research produced during the decade in Australia, was able to identify emerging research gaps and future directions for ACE research indicated in the literature. Indeed, the idea of gaps in ACE research has been a consistent research theme in itself.

It is useful to compare the state of ACE research at the start of the decade with that the end. In the *Come in Cinderella* report in 1991, the main future research priorities were 'a coherent, comprehensive and properly funded mechanism for the collection of statistical information' (p.157) to improve information on '... patterns of participation ... who is providing what ... to what effect and at what cost' (Senate 1991, p.157).

In 1992, the embryonic Australian Association of Adult and Community Education Research Network (in Harris & Willis 1992, pp.160–70) identified some short term 'emerging trends' in research (pp.162–3), 'gaps and areas of need' (pp.163–4), as well as a detailed medium to long-term research agenda (pp.164–9). At that time, ACE research in Australia was seen to '... [lack] co-ordination at either the state or federal levels' (p.163), was '... generally ad hoc, often undertaken in isolation from and in ignorance of other studies ... often inadequately reported, seldom integrated into improved practice ...' (Harris & Willis 1992, pp.163–4). There was also '... no on-going collection of even the most basic descriptive data on patterns of provision and participation ...' (p.164).

Many of these observations from early in the decade no longer apply to ACE in Victoria and New South Wales. Both States now have an active ACE research agenda and data collection strategies. By the end of the decade, both State sectors knew their participants and their changing market well on a regional and State-wide basis. While Harris and Willis's (1992) observations continue to apply to most other States and Territories, several changes are evident nationally. They include the advent of considerable commissioned, vocationally oriented research support through ANTA and the MCEETYA ACE Task Force, the progressive involvement of NCVER in ACE-related research and improved ACE data collection and analysis

Foreman's (1995) mid-decade review of ACE research produced some 'tentative observations about future research' (Foreman 1995, pp.5–8) which are pertinent to this review as well as to the NCVER (Borthwick et al. 2001) ACE-scoping exercise. In 1995 there was a perceived need to consolidate existing participation studies as well as to look more closely at non-participants and under-represented learners in ACE. Other fruitful areas of ACE research identified by Foreman (1995) were historical research, research into open learning and new information technologies, enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of ACE providers and women in ACE. While most have since been further investigated or are being researched, all remain relevant research priorities in 2000.

Foreman also anticipated some emerging research methodology issues. Later in the decade there was more effort on larger, in-depth, better co-ordinated, collaborative and more strategic research as well as research which involved State comparisons of ACE provision, in part through ANTA funding and NCVER and National Research and Evaluation Committee (NREC) co-ordination. However, Foreman's concern about a lack of longitudinal studies, and particularly the perennial problem of common data definitions and items of collection beyond ACE sector States, remained in 2000.

Hartley (1996, p.21), in a review of general adult education, noted the importance of well-planned, longitudinal research able to throw light on varied outcomes and its social impacts for groups and individuals.

Butterworth (BACE 1996a, pp.56–63) suggested some challenges for future researchers of a somewhat different order, many of which have not been reflected in ACE research to date. They included evaluation of ACE structures and investigation of separation between operations and policy formulation and research into 'doing more with less', community service obligations, competitive reform, growing accountability, resources and their allocation, industrial relations and skills shortages. Overall, Butterworth (1996) was concerned about a general lack of evaluative research, ideological differences between researchers and research administrators, a lack of research support for policy and planning, more support for development as a consequence of research, more examination of VET interfaces and more explicit limitations reported in the work of researchers.

Wheeler (in BACE 1996a, pp.73–4) identified some quite different future research issues for ACE on the basis of NSW participation research. They included a need for multivariate analysis to explain participation differences between groups, research barriers to participation (including fees and costs), investigation of the link between vocational intent and vocational outcomes and progression from non-accredited to higher level study.

The *Beyond Cinderella* report (Senate 1997) regarded the research developments since 1991 as encouraging, particularly the amount and quality of data (Senate 1991, p.35), although the data had not been sufficiently disaggregated at that time '... to provide an accurate picture of the patterns of participation across target equity groups' (Senate 1991, p.40), particularly outside accredited programs. The Senate report also urged future attention to non-participation (pp.65–6), participation by women (pp.66–7) and the ACE VET interface (p.67).

suggestions towards the end of the decade

Adult Learning Australia identified areas for future research (*Adult Learning Australia*, Autumn 2000, p.13) including:

- marketing and promotion
- demographics, in order to establish 'Who are the adult learners?'
- new conceptions of adult learning (many ways, many sites)
- what is being learned and why
- learning communities, lifelong learning and learning cities
- impacts of social change and ageing issues
- appropriate methodologies
- 'streams' as a course classification system

Some suggestions for future research from very recent (1998–2000) ACE researchers included:

- research which makes a difference to practice, keeps the confidence of governments and communities and makes '... a conscious assault on the narrow economism which eats at the heart of humanism' (Schofield in Macrae & Hazel 1998, pp.10–11)

- strategically focussed research to strengthen the sector and to expand its scope and influence, as well as research into new information and communication technologies and an emphasis on the '... right research questions (which) arise out of the work itself and from active participation in community life' (Praetz in Macrae & Hazel 1998, pp.48–51)
- action research in the community and application of research findings to inform future policy and practices including ACE promotion, markets, diversity, professional development, technology and curriculum (ACFEB 1999b)
- the need for a 'learning community'-focused research culture and for research to identify and promote the 'value added' to the economy and society through ACE (ACFEB 1999b)
- research not highly constrained by time lines and policy agendas and which might better inform policy, by embodying both depth and complexity and invite or tolerate the contradiction of current policy positions (McIntyre 1999, p.6)
- new models of research, including feminist and post-structuralist perspectives, which would '... engage more with the social and political forces that are determining the agendas for policy and proactive in adult education and training' (McIntyre 2000, pp.114–15)
- research to tease out the artificial and unhelpful arbitrary divisions between vocational, adult and community education, exposed in deliberations associated with the introduction of the GST in July 2000 (Senate 1999)
- research treating participants as volunteers; learning why some people choose to define themselves as non-learners; research which is more social and less individualistic, acknowledging and addressing research into informal learning (Field 2000, pp.11, 12)
- research filling gaps in data that is (or is not) currently included in AVETMIS collections for particular States and Territories (Borthwick et al. 2001, table 8)

A number of other, future research issues surfaced from dialogue between authors and the reviewers of this report. They included more research into:

- *workers, volunteers and non-course learning*

  As discussed in the body of this report, recent research into the ACE paid workforce in some States addressed issues such as professional development needs, career pathways and conditions. These issues have assumed higher profiles with the movement of ACE into accredited course provision. But the role of the unpaid workforce in ACE—the volunteers—also warrants further research, both in the documentation of patterns and outcomes of volunteer participation (for example, into paid employment) and in terms of broader contributions to social capital. While it is recognised that much 'non-course' learning goes on in ACE—in the work done by volunteers, in networks of information established—the more systematic documentation of this aspect of ACE provision would also contribute to a broader appreciation of the sector.

- *more participation studies which blend the qualitative community analysis and the mapping of participation in communities*

Changes in the education, employment and training environments have meant that in recent years new client groups have emerged as beneficiaries of ACE.

To date ACE research has focussed on the 'macro' and 'micro' aspects of participation—the overview studies which deal with participation issues and the course or provider-based studies highlighting services provided to particular groups. A marrying of the two takes participation studies to a new level—exploring not only who does ACE but why. Such research would be better placed to canvass relative reasons for participation and where (and for whom) ACE has strongest effect and appeal.

Changes in the education, employment and training environments have meant that in recent years new client groups have emerged as beneficiaries of ACE. In recent years for example young people have been approaching ACE in unprecedented numbers. Recent major reviews into post-compulsory schooling in a number of States (for example, Victoria and Western Australia) have expressed concern about the educational and training futures confronting young people with interrupted schooling. Anecdotal advice is that many such young people find that the ACE context provides a learning environment preferable to school: student-centred learning styles and the less hierarchical teacher–learner relationships which are characteristic of ACE have strong appeal for these young people. Trend analysis, together with more qualitative work, is needed for a better understanding of how such young people's needs can best be met, either within ACE or in an articulated and developed relationship between ACE and other educational and training providers.

At the other end of the demographic spectrum ACE bodies are becoming increasingly interested in the field of older learners. The nature of senior communities has changed globally due to changed working patterns, longer life expectancy and better financial security. Many are fitter mentally and physically than previous generations of older people, with expectations of many years active life ahead. Many are looking for opportunities to continue learning and to keep their minds and bodies active (see Dale 2000). Research needs to be undertaken into the particular needs of this group, and the ways in which ACE might be well placed both to meet those needs and to benefit from increased participation by this group. Such research should take into consideration the particular status of this client group. The measurement of outcomes and benefits should be undertaken in a context where certain standard indices—for example, transition to employment or further education—may not necessarily be applicable. Instead other benefits—greater personal autonomy, familiarity and confidence with some of the 'tools' of modern life (computers, new technology), development and consolidation of a network of personal friendships, sense of purpose and well-being—may apply.

- *Interface between ACE and other education and training providers*

  Work undertaken on accreditation in ACE and on cross-sectoral provision of training and learning in Victoria exposed certain weaknesses in the relationships and communication between ACE providers and institutions in other sectors. Pathways research, often based on work done at local levels, addresses this issue in part. More needs to be done, however, to clarify the status of ACE courses, and their current and potential relationships with those of other education and training sectors.

- *the economics of ACE, including user-pays arrangements*
- *the potential of information technology for more effective, more widely accessible and higher levels of learning*

127

references

AAACE (Australian Association of Adult and Community Education) 1991, *Celebrate the difference: Skills formation through community-based adult education,* report funded by Department of Employment, Education and Training, Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, Canberra.

—— 1993, *AAACE News,* Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, Canberra, September, p.21.

——1994, 'ACE and unemployment, employment and training', *AAACE News,* Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, February, pp.6–11.

——1996,'A working map of adult and community education', *AAACE information series,* Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, Canberra.

AAAE (Australian Association of Adult Education) 1986, *Submission to the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) for the 1988–1900 triennium,* Australian Association of Adult Education, Canberra.

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 1995, *Outcomes and pathways in adult and community education,* report by Australian Bureau of Statistics for Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

——1997, *Education and training in Australia,* Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

——1998, *Education and training in Australia,* Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

ACE VIC (Adult and Community Education Victoria) n.d., *A good governance guide for ACE providers,* Adult and Community Education Victoria, Melbourne (Consultants B Sproull and I Shrives).

ACFEB (Adult, Community and Further Education Board) 1994, *Snapshots: A statistical profile of adult students and their opinions,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1996a, 'Access for adults: 1995 participation in further education and community-based education in Victoria, summary report', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

——1996b, 'Research methods for ACE', *Multiple Choice,* Autumn, pp.8–10.

——1996c, 'Research methods for ACE', *Multiple Choice,* Spring, pp.8–9.

——1996d, 'Women's participation in adult education in the community: An issues paper', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1997a, *The community in ACE: An issues paper,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

——1997b, *Speaking back: Building a research culture for ACFE,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne (Prepared by D Bradshaw and H Macrae).

—— 1997c, *Transforming lives, transforming communities: Conceptual framework for further education curriculum,* Adult Community and Further Education Board, Victoria, Melbourne (later published in second edition as Bradshaw 1999).

—— 1997d, *Young & ACE,* a report prepared for ACFEB by the Gippsland and Northern Metropolitan Regional Councils of ACE, Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1997e, 'Getting wired: Using the new convergent technologies in adult and community education: A planning kit for ACE providers', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1998, *Seamlessness: The convergences for ACE,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1999a, 'Guidelines and conditions for eligibility and registration of ACE organisations', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1999b, 'Taking ACE to the year 2000: research implementation plan', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1999c, 'Taking ACE to the year 2000: Curriculum implementation plan 1999–2000', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1999d, 'Taking ACE to the year 2000: New learning technologies implementation plan 1999–2000', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1999e, 'Taking ACE to the year 2000: Professional development implementation plan 1999–2000', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1999f, 'Taking ACE to the year 2000: Research implementation plan', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1999g, 'Taking ACE to the year 2000: Koorie participation implementation plan 1999–2000' Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1999h, *Multiple Choice* Autumn (Issue highlighting the needs of older learners in ACE) Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

—— 1999i, *Multiple Choice* Autumn (Issue highlighting the needs of youth in ACE), Adult Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

ACT Office of Training and Adult Education 1999, *Report on adult community education in the ACT,* ACT Office of Training and Adult Education, Canberra.

ACT VETA (Australian Capital Territory Vocational Training Authority) 1996, *Developing adult and community education in the ACT: A discussion paper,* Australian Capital Territory Vocational Education and Training Authority, Canberra.

Adams, C 1996, *ACE sector accreditation, handbook and report,* Department of Vocational Education and Training Tasmania for Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane.

Adult Learning Australia, Autumn 2000.

AGB McNair 1995, *The adult education survey,* Board of Adult, Community and Further Education, Darlinghurst.

Ah Chee, D 1998, 'Aboriginal self-determination development strategies and adult education', paper to 2nd National Indigenous Peoples Training Conference, 10 March, Surfers Paradise.

ALP (Australian Labor Party) 1998, 'Education and youth affairs policy', 1998 election.

Alt, M & Beatty, D 1996, *An inclusive ACE: Broadening participation in adult and community education,* Alt, Statis and Associates, project for NSW Board of Adult and Community Education, funded by Australian National Training Authority, Darlinghurst.

Anderson, D 1999, 'Reintegrating ACE and TAFE: A lost opportunity', *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education,* vol.39, no.1, pp.3–14.

Angwin, J 1997, 'The shifting boundaries of adult and vocational education', *Changing Education* 3/4 (4/1) pp.1–5.

Angwin, J, Henry, C, Laskey, L, McTaggart, R & Picken, N 1998, 'Paths to pathways: Vocational education and training for educationally disadvantaged groups of young people', ANTA Research Advisory Council project, Deakin University, Geelong.

ANTA (Australian National Training Authority) 1997, *Developing a training market of the future: Review of research literature,* submission to ANTA.

——1999, *National marketing strategy: Summary: Community and employer research,* Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane.

—— 2000 *Turning on learning communities,* Australian National Training Authority State Development Project, Brisbane.

ANTA (Australian National Training Authority) n.d. 'Responding to community needs: Adult Education Centre for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Persons' in *Quality initiatives and best practice in public training providers, case studies,* Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane.

ARIS (Adult Resources and Information Service) 1999, *ARIS Resources Bulletin,* vol.10, no.1.

ATSIPTAC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council) 1999, *Partners in a learning culture, Australia's national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategy for vocational education and training 1999–2003,* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Training Advisory Council, Broadmeadows.

BACE (Board of Adult and Community Education) 1995a, *A state of learning,* Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

—— 1995b, *The adult education survey,* Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

—— 1996a, *No limits to learning,* proceedings of the Adult Learners Week Conference, Coogee, 14–15 September 1995, Board of Adult and Community Education, Darlinghurst,

—— 1996b, *Making a difference: Model projects in ACE,* Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

—— 1996c, 'ACE sector and VET for Aboriginal people', Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, *Training Agenda* vol.1, no.2, May, p.14.

—— 1999, *ACE Community profile kit,* Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

—— 2000a, *Report on the use of non-financial data by ACE providers,* Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

—— 2000b 'Structures for the delivery and co-ordination of rural ACE', research project terms of reference, Board of Adult and Community Education, NSW, www.tafensw.edu.au/BACE/nefirst/Research/Termsref.htm, accessed 1 May 2000.

Bagnall, R 1994, *Conceptualising adult education for research and development: Selected critiques,* Centre for Learning and Work Research, Faculty of Education, Griffith University, Nathan.

—— 1996, Submission no. 73 to Senate References Committee of Employment, Education and Training, Inquiry into Adult and Community Education, Submissions vol. 5, submission by AAACE Research Network, pp.107–17.

—— 2000, 'Lifelong learning and the limitations of economic determinism', *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* vol.19, no. 1, pp.20–35.

—— 2000 (in progress) *The contribution of ACE to vocational outcomes across five countries: Australia, India, Fiji, Phillipines and Thailand,* UNESCO, Paris.

Barnett, K & Wilson, S 1994, *Challenges and choices: A study of four providers of adult community eduction,* NCVER, Adelaide.

Barrera, S & Robertson, R 1997, 'Identification of the adult and community education sector and its role in the WA vocational education and training system', Nexus Strategic Solutions, for Western Australian Department of Training, Perth.

Belanger, P & Valdivielso, S 1997, *Adult education participation in industrialised countries,* UNESCO, Hamburg.

Bennett, P 1998, 'Good, better, best management practices in ACE' in *Speaking back again: Report of the 1997 ACFE research forum,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne, pp.45–7.

Bennink, R & Blackwell, P 1995, *Access for all in adult and community education: Overcoming barriers to participation,* Adult Community Education Unit, Department of Employment, Training and Further Education, Adelaide.

Benseman, J 1996, 'Participation in the fourth sector', in *The fourth sector: Adult and community education in Aotearoa/New Zealand,* ed. J Benseman, B Findsen and M Scott, The Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, pp.274–84.

Bishop, R, Gilchrist, M, Hockings, C & Jones, W 1995, *Striving for quality: Selected case studies of good practice in NSW adult and community education,* Board of Adult, Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

Bishop, S 1997, 'A vote for NSW ACE', *Australian Training Review,* 24, p.24.

Boote, J 1997, 'Flexible learning, students with disabilities in the ACE sector', *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education,* vol.37, no.3, November, pp.145–51.

Borthwick, J et al. 2001, 'Scope of ACE in Australia and implications for improved data collection: Final report', unpublished report to ANTA, NCVER, Adelaide.

Bottomley, J & Howells, Y 1998, 'Widening participation in adult community education (ACE): Strategies for using the strength inherent in the cultural diversity of communities and individuals', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Boughton, B & Durnan, D 1996, Submission to the Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers, Canberra.

—— 1997, 'Best practice and benchmarking in Aboriginal community-controlled adult education', Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers, Canberra.

Bradshaw, D 1995, *Multiple images, common threads: Case studies of good practice in adult community education,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

——1997/1999, *Transforming lives, transforming communities: A conceptual framework for further education,* first ed 1997, Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Brennan, B 1997, 'Dealing with the enemy', *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education,* vol.37, no.1, pp.4–11.

Brown, T 1995, *Adult learning and work for life: ACE and VET in Germany and Britain,* UTS Printing Services, Sydney.

—— 1999, 'ACE for a just society', *Adult Learning Australia,* 3, June, p.25.

Brown, T, Gillam, R & O'Connell, K 1994, *A state of learning: A report on adult and community education in New South Wales,* Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

Butler, E & Ferrier, F 1999, 'Doing research: Talking policy: The case of equity and VET', in *The impact of R & D on VET decision making: A range of case studies,* ed. C Selby Smith, NCVER, Adelaide, pp.169-77.

Butler, E & Lawrence, K 1996, *Access and equity within vocational education and training for people in rural and remote Australia,* background report to Australian National Training Authority, Centre for Labour Studies, University of Adelaide.

Butterworth, P 1996, 'Some new challenges for researchers in vocational education and training' in *No limits to learning,* proceedings of the Adult Learners Week Conference, Coogee, September 1995, Darlinghurst, Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, pp.56–63.

Campbell, A & Curtin, P 1999, *ACE—Some issues,* NCVER, Adelaide.

Candy, P 1999, 'Lifelong learning: Critical, desirable or just a good idea?' *Adult Learning Australia,* 6 November, pp.3–5.

CAR (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation) 1997, *The Australian Reconciliation Convention: The people's movement for reconciliation,* proceedings of the Australian Reconciliation Convention: Human rights and Indigenous Australians, book 3, 26–28 May, Canberra.

Casey (Casey Institute of TAFE) 1996, *Koori needs analysis project report,* Casey Institute of TAFE, Dandenong.

Chamberlain, S & Hughes, I 1998, 'Young unemployed people in adult community education project', in *Speaking back again: Report of the 1997 ACFE research forum,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne, pp.16–19.

Chessell, D 1996, 'Parallel education and defining the fourth sector', *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education,* vol.36, no.3, pp.210–19.

Childs, M (ed) 1997, *A slight breathing space: A guide to working with micro and small to medium business enterprises for adult educators and the VET sector,* University of Western Sydney, Nepean.

Clemans, A & Bradshaw, D 1998, '... But who'll answer the phone?: A report into small business women learning in community settings', Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Clemans, A & Rushbrook, P 1997, *Forging pathways: Good practice in community-based adult education,* Office of Training and Further Education and Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Clementson, R, Douglas, M & Kelly, M 1996, 'New literacy: Navigating the information superhighway: A report on convergent technologies in adult and community education', Adult Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Colardyn, D 1998,'Assessment and recognition for lifelong learning', article prepared for the Commission for Adult Education, Ministry of Education, Sweden.

Commonwealth of Australia 1993, *Restoring full employment: A discussion paper,* Committee of Employment Opportunities, Commonwealth Government, Canberra.

Cope, B et al. 1995, *Assessment and access to adult literacy programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people wishing to participate in vocational education and training,* Department of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra.

Coventry, V & Higginson, C 1996, *Issues, barriers and strategies: Open learning in adult community education,* issues paper, for Ministerial Council for Employment, Education and Training, ACE Taskforce managed by Western Australian Department of Training, Perth.

CPET (University of Melbourne/RMIT University Centre on Post Compulsory Education and Training) 2000, 'Early leavers survey, May 2000', unpublished research, University of Melbourne/RMIT University Centre on Post Compulsory Education and Training, Melbourne.

CRLRA (Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia) 2000, *Managing change through VET: The role of vocational education and training in Regional Australia,* Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, Launceston.

Crombie, A 1993, 'Into the future: ACE's many faces', *AAACE News,* December pp.6–11.

——1995, 'Review of the ANTA agreement', submission from the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, October 13, Canberra.

—— 1996a, 'Cinderella four years on', in *No limits to learning,* proceedings of the Adult Learners' Week Conference, Coogee, 14–15 September 1995, Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

—— 1996b, 'The role of adult and community education in the national VET system', in *Training together: 2nd National Conference on vocational education and training: Conference proceedings,* Adelaide 3–5 July, Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane.

—— 1998a, 'Adult learning and social capital' *Adult Learning Australia,* 5, November, pp.5–7.

—— 1998c 'Adult learning Australia', *Adult Learning Australia,* 3, June, pp.1-2.

Crothers, J 1996, *RPL means getting credit where it's due: Recognition of prior learning in adult and community education,* Institute of Adult Education, Hobart.

Dale, L 2000, 'Learning in the Third Age', in *International Handbook on Lifelong Learning,* April 2000.

Daly, B 1994, 'Research is not a dirty word: It just depends on how it's used', *Fine Print ,* vol.16, no.3, Spring, pp.12–13.

DEE (UK Department for Education and Employment) 1998, *The learning age: A renaissance for a new Britain,* green paper, UK Department for Education and Employment, UK www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/greenpaper/index.htm, accessed 8 April 2000.

Delors, J 1996, *Learning, the treasure within,* report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, UNESCO, Paris.

DET (Department of Employment and Training) 2001, *The untapped potential benefits for the individual, community and the workplace,* Queensland ACE mapping project, Brisbane.

DETAFE (SA Dept of Employment, Training and Further Education) 1995, *Access for all in ACE: Overcoming barriers to participation, report and provider handbook,* Adult Community Education Unit, Department of Employment, Training and Further Education, Adelaide.

—— 1997a, *ACE in TAFE SA,* report of the Adult Community Education Task Force, Department of Employment, Training and Further Education, Adelaide.

—— 1997b, *Adult community education enrolment statistics 1996,* Department of Employment, Training and Further Education, Adelaide.

DETE (SA Department of Education, Training and Employment) 1998, 'The adult community education (ACE) grant information book 1998/9 Part I: General information and part II: Application forms and information', Department of Education, Training and Employment, Adelaide.

DETIR (Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations)1997, *ACE–VET development program 1997/8 adult community education, report,* Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane.

—— 1999a, 1999 *Community training identification project, phase II report,* Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane.

—— 1999b, *ACE VET program: Application and funding guidelines,* Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane.

—— 1999c, *Community literacy program,* Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane.

—— 2000a,'Adult Community Advisory Committee', Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane, www.dtir.qld.gov.au/vetinfo/accesseq/a&e/acecomm.htm (Accessed 2 March 2000).

—— 2000b, *Adult community education–vocational education and training (ACE VET) Program,* Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane, www.dtir.qld.gov.au/vetinfo/funding/acevet.htm, accessed 2 March 2000.

—— 2000c *Mapping and identifying the ACE sector in Queensland,* Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane.

Dobson, I & Sharma, R 1998,'The greying of higher education in Australia', *Adult Learning Australia,* 4, September, pp.14–15.

Dryen, R & Schofield, K 1999, 'Key performance indicators for adult community education', final report (unpublished).

DTEC (Department of Training and Education Co-ordination NSW) 1997, *Demonstrating best practice in vocational education and training: NSW projects 1996,* Department of Training and Education Co-ordination NSW, Sydney.

Ducie, V 1994, *Opening doors: Community neighbourhood houses and learning centres' influence on personal development, skills development and learning outcomes,* Learning Centre Link, Perth.

EFA (International Consultative Forum on Education for All) 2000, 'Europe and North America redefine basic education for the information society', International Consultative Forum on Education for All, www2.unesco.org/efa/newsjan2000/warsaw2.htm, accessed 8 April 2000.

Evans, M 1988, 'Does participation in adult education lead to further formal study?', NSSS Research Report: *Adult Education 1988–2,* Australian National University, Canberra.

—— 1995, *Australian adult educations: Survey 1994,* report to the Department of Employment, Education and Training, Australian National University, Canberra.

—— n.d. 'A nation of learners: Participants in adult education', national social science report to Department of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra.

Falk, I (ed) 1998, *Learning communities, regional sustainability and the learning society: An international symposium,* conference proceedings, volumes 1 and 2, Launceston, Tasmania 13–20 June, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania, Launceston.

—— 1999, 'The convergence of vocational and adult education in learning communities', *Community College Journal,* vol.23, no.8, pp.697–716.

Falk, I & Harrison, L 1998, *Indicators of social capital: Social capital as the product of local interactive learning processes,* CRLRA discussion paper D4/1999, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, Launceston.

Falk, I & Kilpatrick, S 1999, *Re-focusing on learning regions: Education, training and lifelong learning for Australia's well-being,* reprint R9/1999, CRLRA reprint series, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, Launceston.

Falk, I, Golding, B & Balatti, J 2000, *Building communities: ACE, lifelong learning and social capital,* Adult Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Faure, E 1972, *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow,* UNESCO, Paris.

FECCA 1996, *Adult and community education and people of non-English speaking backgrounds,* Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, submission no. 77 to Senate References Committee Inquiry into the developments in adult and community education since 1991, submissions, vol 5, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, pp.145–210.

FEFC (Further Education Funding Council) 1997, *Learning works: Widening participation in further education,* report of the Widening Participation Committee, Further Education Funding Council, Coventry.

Field, J 2000, 'Good value research', *Adult Learning Australia* 1, Autumn, pp.10–13.

Foley, G 1993, 'Adult education research as interpretive activity and social production', *Studies in Continuing Education,* vol.15, no.2, pp.75–95.

—— 1996, 'The debate we had to have in Australian adult education', *AAACE News,* February, pp.1–3.

—— 2000, 'A framework for understanding adult learning and education', in *Understanding adult education and training,* ed. G Foley, 2nd ed., Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, pp.7–22.

Foreman, J 1995, 'Review of research and development in the adult and community education sector 1992–1995', Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, December, Canberra.

Forwood, A & McClean, R 2000 (in progress), *Defining and scoping human resource development in TAFE Victoria,* Dench McLean, Melbourne.

Funnell, R (ed) 1996, *A handbook of research in adult and vocational education,* NCVER, Adelaide.

Fukuyama, P 1995, *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity,* Free Press, New York.

GATE (Geelong Adult Training and Education) 2000, *Employee development programs, pilot study report,* for Australian National Training Authority and Adult, Community and Further Education Board, www.acfe.vic.gov.au/publications/EDP's.htm, accessed 4 March 2000.

Golding, B & Volkoff, V 1999, *Creating outcomes: Individuals and groups on the VET journey,* Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne for Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane.

Gribble, H & Grant, A 1992, *Life stories: Adult students take on literacy,* Department of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra.

Harris, R & Willis, W (eds) 1992, *Striking a balance: Adult and community education in Australia towards 2000,* Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, Canberra.

Hartley, R 1996, *General education: A position paper,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Harvey, B & McGinty, S 1988, *Learning my way,* papers to National Conference on adult Aboriginal learning, Institute of Applied Aboriginal Studies, Western Australian College of Advanced Education, Mt Lawley.

Hawke, G & McIntyre, J 1999, 'ACE works', in *The impact of R & D on VET decision making,* ed. C Selby Smith, NCVER, Adelaide, pp.21–7.

Hobson, P & Welbourne, L 1998, 'Adult development and transformative learning', *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* vol.17, no.2, pp.72–86.

Hodge, R 1999, 'Transforming lives, transforming communities: Making the (in)credulous incredible', *Fine Print,* vol.22, no.1, Autumn, pp.16–19.

Hoskins, R 1999, 'A strategy for on-line delivery vocational education and training NSW adult and community education', Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

—— 2000, 'A review and evaluation', prepared for the NSW Board of Adult and Community Education, Sydney.

Hurworth, R 1995, *Living longer, learning later: Assessing the education needs of the older adult in Victoria,* Active Seniors Project report for the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and Sport and Recreation, Centre for Program Evaluation, University of Melbourne, Parkville.

Hurworth, R 1996, 'Multiple methods for empowerment: Reflections on the "Living longer learning later active seniors" project, paper to *Speaking back* ACFE research conference, 8–9 August, Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Ife, J 1997, 'Competing discourses in human services' in *Rethinking social work: Towards critical practice,* Longman, Melbourne, pp.39–75.

IIPPREA (International Institute for Policy, Practice and Research in the Education of Adults) 1997, *Global transformation and the education of adults,* International Institute for Policy, Practice and Research in the Education of Adults, Detroit.

Jansen, T & van der Veen, R 1997, 'Individualisation: The new political spectrum and the function of adult education', *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* vol.16, no.4, pp.264–76.

Johnson, R & Hinton F 1986, *It's human nature: Non-award adult and continuing education in Australia,* Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, Canberra.

Kangan, M (chair) 1974, *TAFE in Australia: Report on needs in technical and further education,* Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Kaye Schofield and Associates 1996a, 'Role of adult and community education in the implementation of a national system for vocational education and training: A discussion paper', Sydney.

——1996b, *ACE–VET: Is it delivering?,* Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

Kelly Associates 1997, *ACE 2000: Towards a learning society,* consultation paper, Kelly Associates Strategic Solutions, Williamstown.

Kelly, C & Goldsworthy, D 1993, *Hidden from view,* Committee on TAFE Training Statistics and Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Kennedy, H 1997, *Learning works: Widening participation in further education,* Further Education Funding Council, UK.

Kenyon, P, Cabalu, H, Koshy, P & Doss, N 2000 (in progress), *The ACE sector's outcomes and its contribution to the economy,* National Research and Evaluation Committee, Adelaide.

Kilpatrick, S 1999, *Social capital and group learning,* CRLRA reprint R/219, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, Launceston.

Kilpatrick, S, Falk, I & Harrison, L 1998, *Learning in rural communities: A response to rapid economic change,* discussion paper D13/1998, CRLRA discussion paper series, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, Launceston.

Kimberley, H 1986, *Community learning: The outcomes report,* Victorian TAFE Board, Melbourne.

Kinnaird, B & Davis, P 1998, *ACE and small business in New South Wales,* NCVER, Adelaide.

Kintzer, F 1999, 'Articulation and transfer: A symbiotic relationship with lifelong learning', *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* vol.18, no.3, May–June, pp.147–54.

Kress, G 1995, *Writing the future: English and the making of a culture of innovation,* National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), Sheffield.

LCL (Learning Centre Link) 1998a, *Opening doors: Summary,* Learning Centre Link, Perth.

—— 1998b, *Pathways from the centre,* Learning Centre Link, Perth.

Macrae, H 1999, 'The changing environment of adult education: An overview, *Converse* 2, pp.6–7.

Macrae, H & Hazel, V 1998, *Speaking back again: Report of the 1997 ACFE research forum,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Mayer, E (Chair) 1992, *Key competencies,* report of the committee to advise the Australian Education Council and Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training in employment-related key competencies for post-compulsory education and training, Melbourne.

Mayo, M & Thompson, J 1995, *Adult learning, critical intelligence and social change,* National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Leicester.

McCormack, R 1994, 'Research: Examining the issues', *Fine Print,* vol.16, no.3, pp.20–2.

MCEETYA (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs) 1993, *National policy, adult community education,* Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Carlton South.

—— 1997, *National policy, adult community education,* Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Carlton South.

McIntyre, J 1993, 'A proposed taxonomy of ACE providers', *AAACE News,* September, pp.13–16.

—— 1995a, 'Community and corporatism: A critique of the concept of community adult education', *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education,* vol.35, no.3, pp.178–85.

—— 1995b, 'Research in adult education and training' in *Understanding adult education and training,* ed. G Foley, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards.

—— 1996, 'Knowing the limits of ACE', in *No limits to learning,* proceedings of the Adult Learners' Week Conference, Coogee, 14–15 September 1995, Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst, pp.64–72.

—— 1997, 'The economics of ACE—user pays and participation', *Adult Learning Australia,* 3, June pp.1, 3–5.

—— 1998, 'Policy symbolism and economic realities: ACE equity and the market', in *Different drums, one beat: Economic and social goals in education and training,* ed. F Ferrier and D Anderson NCVER, Adelaide pp.169–76.

—— 1999, 'The discursive construction of ACE in national policy', paper delivered to forum on Languages and Literacy Policy: Australian perspectives, 25–26 February, University of Technology, Sydney.

—— 2000, 'Research in adult education and training', *Understanding adult education and training,* ed. G Foley, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, pp.100–16.

McIntyre, J & Crombie, A 1995, *Who are Australia's adult learners?,* Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, Canberra.

McIntyre, J & Kimberley, H 1998, *Planning pathways for women from adult community education to vocational education and training,* report for Australian National Training Authority and Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, University of Technology, Sydney.

McIntyre, J, Brown, T & Ferrier, F 1997, *The economics of ACE delivery,* Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

McIntyre, J, Morris, R & Tennant, M 1993, *The vocational scope of ACE: Vocational education and training within the adult and community education sector in New South Wales,* Department of Industrial Relations, Employment, Training and Further Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

McIntyre, J, Foley, G, Morris, R & Tennant, M 1995, *ACE works: The vocational outcomes of adult and community education courses in New South Wales,* Board of Adult and Community Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

McIntyre, J, Volkoff, V & Perry, J 2000 (in progress), *The ACE workforce in Victoria,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

McKinney, S 1995, 'On home ground: Community-based approaches to Koori adult education: A report on the special needs grant project', Western College of Adult Education, Dubbo.

Moore, A 1997, 'ACE and adding value to the training market' in *Market for vocational education and training: Who pays, who profits,* Adelaide, 28–30 July.

Moran, T 1994, 'ACE and TAFE: Working in partnership', *AAACE News,* September, pp.2–4.

Morgan (Roy Morgan Research Centre) 1995, *Evaluation survey of participants and non participants in adult, community and further education,* Roy Morgan Research Centre, Melbourne for Adult, Community and Further Education Board.

Murriman 1998, 'ACE–VET Paper', paper by Murriman Training Services to 2nd National Indigenous Peoples' Training Conference, 10 March, Surfers Paradise.

NCVER (National Centre for Vocational Education Research) 1997, *Australian vocational education and training statistics in detail,* NCVER, Adelaide.

—— 1999, *Overview of Australian personal enrichment education and training programs 1997,* NCVER, Adelaide.

—— 2000a, *Vocational Education and Training Data Base: VOCED* at www.ncver.edu.au, accessed 7 April 2000.

—— 2000b, *Australian personal enrichment education and training programs: An overview, 1998,* NCVER, Adelaide.

New London Group 1996, 'A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures', *Harvard Educational Review,* Spring, vol.66, p.1

Nordic Council of Ministers 1995, *The golden riches in the grass: Lifelong learning for all,* Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen.

NOWinFE (National Organisation of Women in Further Education Inc) n.d., 'Response to review of ANTA agreement—issues paper', NOWinFE, www.converse.com.au, accessed 26 June 2000.

NSW TAFE 1995, 'ACE to TAFE NSW credit transfer' in *Recognition in TAFE NSW,* TAFE NSW, Sydney.

NT (Northern Territory Government) 2000 (in progress), 'Mapping of the ACE sector in the Northern Territory', Darwin.

Octarine Educational 2000, 'Proposal to research and publish an analysis of the participation of equity target groups in ACE', NSW Board of Adult Community Education, Sydney.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) 1996, *Lifelong learning for all,* OECD, Paris.

Onyx, J & Bullen, P 1997, *Measuring social capital in five communities,* CACOM working paper series, no. 41, University of Technology, Sydney.

——2000, *Social capital and public policy in Australia,* Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp.105–35.

Osborn, T 1998, *Rags and riches: ACE in TAFE 1994–1995: Participation rates in rural and remote Queensland: A report,* TAFE Queensland ACE Network Support Unit, Brisbane.

OTFE (Office of Technical and Further Education) 1996, 'Managing diversity policy', ministerial statement, Melbourne.

OVET 2000, *Mapping ACE in Tasmania,* project brief, Office of Vocational Education and training, Tasmania.

Papanicolaou & Fitch 1995, 'Identifying issues and preparing a plan for people with an intellectual disability accessing ACFE programs', Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council of Adult, Community and Further Education, Box Hill.

Parker, I 1996, 'Report on the relationship between ACE and publicly funded vocational education and training in Queensland', Training and Employment Queensland, Brisbane.

Path-finder Directory 1996, 'Pathfinder report: Mapping the adult community education sector in South Australia', ACE Unit, Adelaide.

Peace, B 1994, 'The evening and community colleges of NSW: A study of their history, provision and concerns: A 1990's perspective', *ECCA Newsletter* 2, Evening and Community Colleges Association of New South Wales, Camperdown.

Peters, L 1994, *A study of outcomes for students participating in adult education at the Council of Adult Education,* Higher Education Division, Evaluations and Investigations Program, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Petheram, R 1994, 'White room, white board, white ways: Overcoming the barriers to Aboriginal adult education', Orana Regional Council of Adult and Community Education Inc.

Pobega, D & Russell, M 1999, *Online ACE: Sharing good practice,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Portes, A 1998, 'Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology,* vol.24, no.1, pp.1–24.

Putnam, R 1993, *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy,* Princeton University Press, Princeton.

—— 1999, 'Social capital: Bowling alone, the book', keynote address to World Bank Social Capital Conference, Washington DC, June.

Quaass, M & Fraser, K 1994, *Beyond the ramp: People with disabilities accessing ACE services,* Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, Canberra.

Randall, S 1992, 'Adult learning at the Council of Adult Education', in *Restructuring adult education and training: Mapping the field,* ed. P Crudden, ACER, Hawthorn.

Robertson, R & Shearwood, W 1996, *Beyond the course: Learning through community centre management,* Learning Centre Link, Perth.

Robinson, C & Davis, P 1997, 'Adult learning and the impact of research', paper to Australian Association of Adult and Community Education National Conference, 24–27 September, Adelaide.

Robles, M 1992, *Neighbourhood houses and cultural diversity: Make room, not allowances,* Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, Richmond.

Rushbrook, P 1996, 'Riding the tiger: ACE and accreditation', *Multiple Choice* 3, Autumn, pp.4–5.

Rushbrook, P & Clemans, A 1999, 'Decision making and "capacity building" in Victorian adult and community education providers: The Forging Pathways learning package', in *The impact of R & D on VET decision,* ed. C Selby Smith, NCVER, pp.104–11.

Saleeba, J 1992, 'Adult education in rural Australia', in *Striking a balance: Adult and community education in Australia towards 2000,* ed. R Harris and P Willis, Centre for Human Resource Studies, University of South Australia and AAACE, Adelaide, pp.420–4.

Sanguinetti, J 1994, 'Practitioner power through participatory action research', *Fine Print,* vol.16, no.3, Spring, pp.8–11.

Saunders, J 2001, *ACE–VET linkages,* NCVER, Adelaide.

Schofield, K & Dryen, R 1996, 'Think local and compete: An analysis of the role of adult and community education in the implementation of a national system for vocational education and training', Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane.

Schwencke, H 1997, *Adult and community education: A snapshot of the conditions and circumstances of being a community-based adult community education (ACE) provider (SA, WA, NSW, Victoria),* Adult Learning Australia, Queensland.

—— 1999, *Adult and community education: A snapshot of the conditions and circumstances of being a community-based adult community education (ACE) provider (SA, WA, NSW, Victoria), September to December 1997,* ALA (Qld. Branch), Paddington.

Seddon, T 1996, 'ACFE Research Conference or why ACFE needs research', *Multiple Choice* 5, Spring, pp.1–2.

Selby Smith, C (ed) 1999, *The impact of R & D on VET decision making: A range of case studies,* NCVER, Adelaide.

Senate 1991, *Come in Cinderella: The emergence of adult and community education,* a report to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, Canberra.

—— 1996, *Beyond Cinderella,* Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, Official Hansard Report, Tuesday 2 September 1996, Canberra.

—— 1997, *Beyond Cinderella: Towards a learning society,* a report of the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, Canberra.

—— 1999, 'Vocational, adult and community education', in *Report of the inquiry into the GST and the new tax system,* Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, March, pp.60–5.

Sharpe, T & Robertson, R 1996, *Adult and community education pathways to vocational education and training,* issues paper, for Ministerial Committee on Employment, Education and Training ACE Taskforce managed by Western Australian Department of Training, Perth.

Shore, S 1997, 'Women in Australian community education: Challenges to policy and suggestions for academic practice', *Convergence,* vol.XXX no.1, pp.24–33.

Smith, J & Spurling, A 1999, *Lifelong learning: Riding the tiger,* Cassell, London.

Socom (Socom Public Relations) 1996, 'ACE markets: Researching current and future ACE markets', Socom Public Relations.

South Coast 1996, 'Creating alternative student pathways in VET language and literacy programs', Adult Community Education, South Coast NSW.

SSEE (Secretary of State for Education and Employment) 1999, *Learning to succeed: A new framework for post-16 learning,* white paper presented to UK Parliament by Secretary of State of Education and Employment, June, www.dfee.gov.uk/post16/pu_white_index.shtml, accessed 8 April 2000.

Stephens, B 1999, 'ACE and Indigenous Australians (1999–2002)', *Adult Learning Australia,* 3, June, p.26 (citing the BACE action plan, ACE and Indigenous Australians).

Sumich, M & O'Connell, K 1997, *Coming up trumps: ACE customer satisfaction research report,* Board of Adult, Community and Further Education NSW, Darlinghurst.

TDE (Tasmanian Dept. of Education) 1999, 'Mentoring community houses as providers of adult community education: A report exploring the potential to develop Tasmanian Community Houses as centres for lifelong learning', Tasmanian Department of Education in conjunction with the Tasmanian Association of Community Houses, Hobart.

Teese, R & Davies, M 1999, *Accreditation in the Victorian ACE sector,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne.

Tennant, M (ed) 1990, *Adult education in Australia: Issues and practices,* International Adult Education Series, Routledge, London.

Thomas, S 1994, 'Planning links between adult and community education and the vocational education and training sector' in *Planning for tomorrow in vocational education and training,* conference papers, national conference, 25–26 July, Sydney, pp.54–61.

Thomas, S 1996, 'Adult and community education (ACE) model', paper to Best practice and quality systems, 8–9 August, Sydney, pp.103–6.

Thomas, S & Moore, A 1995, 'Recognition in the adult and community (ACE) sector', paper to Recognition forum 24–25 May, Sydney.

Thompson, C, Noble, D & McFarlan, B 1995, *Evaluation of the Hawthorn Cluster,* Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council of ACFE, Box Hill.

Tight, M 1996, 'Changing concepts in adult education', *Studies in Continuing Education,* vol.18, no.1, pp.59–72.

Timmers, G (ed) 1997, *Portraits: A showcase of good ideas in adult community education,* Goulburn Ovens Murray Regional Council of Adult, Community and Further Education, Wangaratta.

Tobias, R 1996, 'What do adult and community educators share in common?', in *The fourth sector: Adult and community education in Aotearoa/New Zealand,* ed. J Benseman, B Findsen and M Scott, The Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, pp.38–64.

Townsend, T & Clemans, A 1995, *The professional development needs of adult, community and further education workers in Southern Western Port Region,* report to Southern Western Port Adult, Community and Further Education Region, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne.

Traynor, G 1996, 'Quality and ACE sector: Towards the new millennium', in *No limits to learning,* proceedings of the Adult Learners Week Conference Coogee, September 1995, Board of Adult, Community and Further Education NSW, Darlinghurst, pp.82–8.

UNESCO 1991, *Education for the 21st century: Asia-Pacific perspectives,* UNESCO, Bangkok.

—— 1997a, *Adult education in a polarising world: Education for all states and trends,* UNESCO, Paris.

—— 1997b, *Adult learning: Empowerment for local and global change in the 21st century: A discussion guide,* UNESCO, Paris.

—— 1997c, *Adult education: A cry for action,* Education for All (EFA) 2000, 27, April–June, UNESCO, Paris.

—— 1999, 'Multiplicity of research on "learning for all", a key for the 21st century', in *Confintea Hamburg (1997): Adult learning and the challenges of the 21st century,* UNESCO, Hamburg.

Usher, R 1993, 'From process to practice: Research, reflexivity and writing in adult education', *Studies in Continuing Education,* vol.15, no.2, March, pp.98–116.

Usher, R, Bryant, I & Johnston, R 1997, 'Adult education and the postmodern challenge: Learning beyond the limits', reviewed by R Hodge in *ARIS Resources Bulletin,* vol.10, no.1, pp.12–13.

VAEAI (Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated) 1998, 'Koorie research in ACE', *Multiple Choice,* vol.14, Summer, p.9.

VETEC (Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission) 1993, *Review of the delivery of adult and community education in Queensland,* Brisbane.

Volkoff, V & Golding, B 1998, *Vocational education and training for people from non-English-speaking backgrounds,* review of research, NCVER, Adelaide.

Volkoff, V, Golding, B & Jenkin, J 1999, *The vocational essence of ACE: The delivery of VET programs by adult and community education providers,* NCVER, Adelaide.

WADOT (WA Dept of Training) 1999, *Strategy for adult community education: Promoting partnerships and pathways 1999–2001,* Western Australian Department of Training, Perth.

—— (n.d.) 'Adult community education: There's no limit to learning', leaflet, Western Australian Department of Training, Perth.

Ward, P 1994, 'Researcher identity in adult literacy', *Fine Print,* vol.16, no.3, Spring, pp.4–7.

Watson, L 1999, 'Lifelong learning in Australia: Analysis and prospects', discussion paper no. 1, Lifelong Learning Network, University of Canberra.

West, S 1994, *Recreating women: A recreation project at the neighbourhood houses within the City of Footscray for women of non-English speaking backgrounds,* final project report, City of Footscray, Footscray.

Whyte, A 1994 *Competence in practice: Frameworks in competence in management of ACE,* Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, Canberra.

Wilkinson, L 1998, 'Best practice for delivery of ACE programs to the Koorie community', in *Speaking back again, Report of the ACFE research forum,* Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne, pp.32–3.

Williams, E (n.d.) 'Vocational programs in ACE, Workers Educational Association, Illawarra', in *Quality initiatives and best practice in public training providers, case studies,* Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane, pp.32–4.

Williams, E, Searle, J & Bevan, F 1996, 'Women in vocationally oriented adult and community education courses: A portrayal of personal goals and outcomes', *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education,* vol.36, no.2, pp.120–7.

Winter, I (ed.) 2000, *Social capital and public policy in Australia,* Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

Woolcock, M 1998, 'Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology,* vol.24, no.1, pp.1–24.

acknowledgements

This consolidation study involved collaboration between Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (Dr Barry Golding) and the University of Melbourne/RMIT University Centre for Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET Centre—Ms Merryn Davies, Ms Veronica Volkoff and Professor Richard Teese). This collaborative research approach is consistent with Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (now Adult Learning Australia) research policy (Senate 1996, Submission 73) of encouragement of the collaborative use of academic expertise across institutional boundaries and of socially balanced research that is directed to illuminating and informing practice in the ACE sector.

Our sincere thanks to Vikki Hampson for excellent administrative and research support. Our thanks also for the advice throughout the project from the Project Steering Committee, ANTA, the MCEETYA ACE Taskforce as well as Jennifer Gibb and her excellent team of reviewers and editors from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

A critical part of our research methodology involved getting feedback on early drafts from 'critical friends', in effect respected and independent ACE researchers in each Australian State and the ACT with some familiarity of the State and Territory contexts in which they were located. Our sincere thanks to Ian Falk (Tasmania), Allie Clemans (Victoria), Elaine Butler (South Australia), Rachel Robertson (Western Australia), Richard Bagnall and Jean Searle (Queensland), Louise Watson (ACT) and John McIntyre (New South Wales) for undertaking this important role. Nevertheless, the authors accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

The PCET/University of Melbourne Research Centre contribution, directed by Professor Richard Teese and undertaken by Merryn Davies, focussed on a critical analysis of the extent to which the various State, Territory and national data collections illustrated a coherent national, 'sectoral' view of ACE. The centre also contributed to consolidation of characteristics of ACE participation, the nature of participation and youth in ACE. The data and literature collection strategies were informed in part by parallel NCVER research on ACE data collection and recording.

While few comparative international studies were available, the review included international literature and comparisons by Veronica Volkoff from PCET/RMIT.

The majority of this research consolidation, including writing and co-ordination, was undertaken by Dr Barry Golding of BRIT. It is of note that this ACE consolidation study has been effectively conducted by and based out of Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE. BRIT is on the site of one of Australia's first technical colleges (Bendigo 1871), itself built on the original site of the Sandhurst Mechanics Institute on the gold diggings in 1851. Rushbrook and Clemans (1999, p.104) noted that ACE and technical and further education (TAFE) in Victoria were born of the same parent: the mechanics institute. The words 'Bendigo Mechanics Institute and Free Library' still feature prominently on the BRIT's Bendigo street frontage.

sources

Different strategies were used in each State and Territory to ensure a wide coverage of recent and in progress ACE data, research and policy documents. Apart from NCVER VOCED clearinghouses generally, libraries scanned included the Council of Adult Education (CAE), Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) and Adult Resources and Information Sources (ARIS) libraries in Melbourne, to which we are particularly grateful. Requests were made for relevant research materials from the main peak State and Territory ACE community stakeholder and government organisations and Adult Learning Australia. State and Territory peak bodies consulted included Adult, Community and Further Education Board (Victoria); College of Advanced Education, Melbourne; NSW Board of Adult and Community Education; NSW Association of Community Adult Education Centres; Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training at University of Technology, Sydney; Department of Employment, Training and Further Education (VET Access and Equity) (South Australia); Workers' Educational Association (South Australia); Community Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association; TAFE Tasmania, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia at University of Tasmania; Adult Education Tasmania (Tasmania), Learning Centre Link (WA), Northern Territory Education and Training Authority (NT) and Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations (Queensland). Our sincere thanks to all those bodies that contributed ACE research materials.

Barry Golding is a researcher in vocational and adult education at Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (BRIT) and senior research fellow for the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania. His recent research has been in adult and community education, also equity in vocational education and training: particularly indigenous vocational education and rural and remote adult education.

Merryn Davies is a research fellow with the Centre for Post-Compulsory Education and Training at the University of Melbourne. Her current research interests include post-compulsory learning environments, vocational education and training and early school leavers, cross-sectoral pathways and adult learning.

Veronica Volkoff is co-director of the Centre for Post-Compulsory Education and Training Research at the University of Melbourne. Her work includes post-graduate teaching, research and international consultancy work on VET capacity building in developing countries for AusAID and UNESCO. Veronica has a long history in the ACE sector, particularly in Victoria, as chair of the Northern Metropolitan Regional Council of ACFE (1996-2000) and her membership of the ACFE Board (1998-2001).

ISBN 0 87397 705 X print edition

ISBN 0 87397 706 8 web edition

BEST COPY AVAILABLE